ill be your slaughterhouse

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/39265719.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham & Abigail Hobbs
Characters:	Will Graham, Abigail Hobbs, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Alana Bloom, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, Freddie Lounds, Dr. Frederick Chilton
Additional Tags:	Murder Dad and Murder Daughter, Developing Relationship, Dark Will Graham, Dark Abigail Hobbs, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Canon-Typical Violence, Pre-Season/Series 01, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Hannibal is Hannibal, Stalking, Brief mentions of Matthew and Will being in a FWB relationship, it is literally a mention, I promise its not that big, Slow Burn, Cannibalism, Ambiguous/Open Ending
Language:	English
Collections:	The Temple Of Athens
Stats:	Published: 2022-05-27 Completed: 2022-06-27 Words: 31,260 Chapters: 2/2

ill be your slaughterhouse

by carnivoroushorror (wyrmwolf)

Summary

> “Indeed. One can only hope the next time she decides to write about you there will be more truth than lies.” Will snorts at Hannibal’s words, “If it’s not rude of me to say, I did not expect you to have a friend outside of prison.”
>
> “Didn’t have friends inside either. She um, I knew her dad more than I knew her, but her dad died tragically while I was in jail. She’s only visiting me for a bit, catching up really.” Will scratches his chin, “I was thinking of teaching her fishing while she was down here, since her dad taught her hunting.”
>
> “What kind of fish do you often like to catch?”
>
> Turning to look Hannibal in the eyes, Will cocks a wolfish grin on his face as he answers, “Massive fish with razor teeth and colorful scales.”
>
> ———
>
> AU In which, Will was in prison for five years before the start of the show, and picks up right when he gets out. Thus which leads to him getting a cannibalistic admirer, a daughter of a dead killer, and a weird friend in an unlikely place.

Notes

> The Devil works hard but I work harder writing Season 1 aus. Split this up in two parts because I'm not sure how I want to finish this up, so please enjoy what I have so far!!

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

I'll be your slaughterhouse, your killing floor, your morgue and final resting, walking around with this bullet inside me like the bullet was already there, like it's been waiting inside me the whole time.

- Wishbone by Richard Siken

“Heya, Willy boy.” A voice calls from his side and suddenly there is a presence right next to him on the bench.

Will looks up from the book he had been reading while he finished dinner only to see his cellmate, Matthew Brown, settle next to him. If it wasn’t the rambunctious way the man’s entire presence could fill up a room, it was the familiar scar on his chin that told Will who exactly was speaking to him. Matthew grinned, a lopsided thing that made it look like one half of his face had been contorted into one of those cartoons they have for children. Two silver teeth on the bottom row shine in the light, they weren’t as shiny as they were when he first got them but they could still make your eyes blink a few times at the light reflecting off of them.

Matthew leans into his space, bottom jaw pushed out as he grinned madly like a gator, “Reading again? What is it this time? History? Fantasy? Crime solving?” He leans in closer and flutters his eyes, “Or did ya sneak a romance book from one of the bitches at the counter? Gonna read me a bedtime story, Willy, while I jerk one out to the sound of your voice?”

Snorting, Will turns his gaze back to the book in his hand, ignoring the man seated next to him, “You didn’t actually come all the way over here to ask me about my book, Matthew.”

The other man makes a put upon sigh and then shuffles around so he can lean himself back against the table, legs kicked out in front of him as if he were any other man reclining on the beach side.

“Come on, don’t be such a spook, Willy. You know I’m just over here being your best of best friends, just fucking around with ya since you wanna sit in the corner by yourself.” Matthew’s head falls back, his dark hair almost kissing the cold plastic tables.

“I like sitting alone. It’s my table.” Will flips to the next page and bookmarks it for later, knowing Matthew would put up a fuss if he kept ignoring him. The younger man smiles up at him knowing what Will had done, he straightens up a little.

“Yeah, yeah- anyways, a little birdie told me you were getting out tomorrow! And I couldn’t help but feel a little heartbroken that you didn’t tell your best pal. How am I supposed to handle being here all by myself, Will?” Matthew sniffs, his face dropping to look sad as he pretends to cry against Will’s shoulder. He did enjoy his acting. “Look at you, about to be a free man.”

“A free man with a court ordered psychiatrist that I have to keep scheduled meetings every week.” Will points out, pushing Matthew off his shoulder so he can finish eating his food.

“Just be happy it’s not an ankle bracket. Plus you got a smoking hot lady shrink! I know the guys are jealous you got the hot one to mess around with your brain, cause I know they all want her messing with more than just their brains.” The inmate winks and gives Will a leering grin, it makes his stomach grow a little sick and he finds himself not hungry anymore.

“She’s married.” Standing up, Will tucks his book under one arm so he can toss the rest of his food away before making the walk back to his cell. Matthew followed right behind him like a dog trailing after freshly cut meat.

“Never stopped a man before.” Matthew laughs at the disgusted face Will makes, “Kidding, kidding, you know I’m not that kind of person. Plus I like cock more than I like boobs, you’d know that first hand wouldn’t you, Willy?”

The guard they pass by gives the two of them a look of mixed shock and disgust, it has Will rolling his eyes as they turn the corner to their hall. Of course Matthew has to go and run his mouth, it usually doesn’t bother Will since he stands on the sidelines or fades into the background when things start to escalate. It should be considered a talent of his, being able to appear so non threatening and non existent that he just fades right into the peeling wallpaper of the place. It’s how he’s gotten through five years of this place without a stitch in his side,

that and because Matthew is Matthew. Meaning he makes friends with the top dogs and isn't afraid to take a shank and gut some guy, especially if said guy if giving Will a second glance.

"Speaking of cock, Willy boy, how about one last blowjob for the road? I'm gonna miss that curly brown hair of yours but I think in my heart I'm gonna miss your cock even more." Matthew throws himself onto the bottom bunk of their cell, lifting his legs up in a submissive display that would have any man ready to jump in for the chance to get his dick wet.

Will on the other hand, is not moved by this.

"Not tonight, Matthew." He sets his book away, looking at the small collection he's able to keep in his cell and wonders if he can take a few with him. Probably for the best he doesn't. Alana said she wanted him to start with a clean slate when he gets out, and that meant leaving his books behind. He'd have to find a bookstore near his house when he gets the time but first he'd need to see about a car.

Matthew's voice jumps up into a high pitched whine, like a pup begging for more milk from its mothers tit. Pathetic, annoying, and desperate. Exactly the kind of thing that would have you killed in this kind of place but with Matthew it was just another little game he liked to play. That and also pretending like the reason he wasn't in here was because he gutted a man in the middle of a grocery aisle, all because the man had dropped the f slur when Matthew was with his then boyfriend at the time. Will still calls him an idiot for doing that in the middle of an aisle, not that he had much of a foot to stand on. What with his brain biting on fire and causing him to kill five people, involuntary murder, that's what the court had called it.

Will doesn't agree with what the court has to say or thinks about what he did, but if he had said something they might have sent him somewhere worse than Baltimore's Detention Center.

When Matthew tries to reach for him, Will avoids his outstretched hand and watches a flash of anger close over the younger man's face. Matthew doesn't get the chance to say anything as Will reaches down and presses his hand to the man's throat, pinning him down to the bed. He can feel his own heartbeat and it doesn't get any faster than it is right now as he watches Matthew try to breath under the weight of his hand.

“I said no, now quit your fucking squirming.” He pushes down a little harder, waits, and then pulls his hand away.

Matthew coughs and takes a few breaths of air before he’s pulling his pants down. His cock springs out of its confines and slaps against his belly, the head already wet and dripping with precome. Will takes his eyes away from the sight, only to catch Matthew’s gaze as the man’s cold eyes stare back into his own. Slowly, Will is flooded with Matthew’s emotions as they come rushing into his brain like a stampede and he can feel the reckless pleasure coming from him. Matthew licks a strip up his hand and starts jerking himself off, teeth bared as he pants and keeps his eyes on Will the entire time.

He is oozing with the desperate need for Will’s touch and appraisal like a dog begging for a treat. Will pulls his eyes away and moves to climb onto the top bunk, their cell filled with the sound of Matthew’s heavy pants and grunts. Occasionally the man calls for Will’s name, begging for him on the top of his tongue.

Will rolls onto his side and falls asleep.

“So how does it feel to be a free man again?” Alana smiles when they reach the first stoplight, she had offered to come pick Will up from the prison that day. It was a nice enough offer but even Will knew the reason she wanted to do it was because they both knew on the outside, Will did not have a single friend, no one was worrying over him or sending him letters. Not a damn person cared about Will Graham when he got out of prison.

Except maybe Alana, but she was clouded with professional curiosity and having a bleeding heart for hopeless causes like Will. He was the kind of dog you find on the side of the road; mangy fur clumped together, shaking and limping from past fits, each run more pronounced than the other one. A starved, weak little creature that made women coo and hold their hands out to see if they could offer some help. Alana was no different, she saw Will and all she saw was a man who had been fucked over by the American health system so badly it caused him to hallucinate and loose his mind. He was the product of the healthcare’s failure and his lawyer was able to show even further that Will’s doctor had hidden Will’s brain scans, showing the inflamed redness on one half of his skull as it melted inside.

Gotta love America for that.

Sniffing, Will runs his fingers over the leather seats, commemorating the texture under his skin to his brain as he thinks of an answer.

“Are we having conversations, Dr. Bloom, or is this *another* session?” Will keeps his eyes on the passenger side rear view window, watching the cars behind them like he’s afraid one of them is going to be filled with cops coming to drag him back to prison. His cheek is still a little wet from the sloppy goodbye kiss Matthew gave him that morning.

Alana’s shoulders tighten, “Just conversation.”

Will makes himself shrink a little to appear non threatening, he feels only a little bad, “No, no, you’re fine. Conversations in prison aren’t always about how you're feeling, they’re mostly of the unsavory sort. And even then, if it’s not about sex and violence then it’s the conversations about men who are missing their daughters or sons birthdays, and those whose wives gave up on them.”

She gives him a tight smile, it looks sad, Alana always looks sad when she is looking at him, “Hopefully we can have happier conversations now that you’re out. I was thinking-“

Her phone begins to shrill in her purse, she curses and keeps her eyes on the road while one hand digs around to find it. Will would help but if he remembers correctly, women tend to frown upon men shoving their hands in their purses. He stays silent, watches from the rear view window as Alana struggles only momentarily until she finds the screaming device.

“Jack? What’s wrong-oh.” Alana goes quiet as a man’s voice is talking over the phone, Will keeps quiet as he tries to not focus on the conversation going on next to him. “Jack, I can’t right now, I’m with-I.”

She sighs and tosses the phone down into her purse, lips thin with distress as she flicks her blinkers on.

“Trouble?”

Alana startles as if she had forgotten Will was there the whole time, “Sorry, it’s just work stuff. If it’s not too much of a bother, I need to swing by and look over some stuff. Crawfords a pain when it comes to new evidence being found, but he's a good man. Is it too far out of your way if you came with?”

Shrugging, Will taps his fingers against the car door, “There’s not much else for me to do besides go home and sit in an empty house. Plus I could use the brush up on outside mannerisms.”

In the corner of his eye, Will catches a smile from Alana as she turns the car off an exit. Not wanting to try and keep up anymore of the conversation, Will closes his eyes for the rest of the car ride, pretending to be asleep while Alana listens to the radio. When they come to a full stop, Will makes sure to wake up before Alana can reach over and put her hand on his shoulder. Still unuse to hands touching him without the intent of harm or sex.

Looking up at the large building, Will blinks, “The FBI Academy? I didn’t know you taught here?”

“I’m a guest speaker most of the time, currently I am doing some consulting work.” Alana explains, stepping out the car and grabbing a few things to bring with her. “Let’s get you a visitor pass.”

Following the younger woman like a second shadow, Will keeps his head down as they walk inside of the academy. Will doesn’t have a problem with cops, having been one himself, he does have a problem with people staring and people knowing about his past. He doesn’t think anyone will notice him as five years in prison will make a man look different. They pay him down at the gate and Will avoids their eyes, the reptilian urge to fight the strangers touching him crawls up his spine like a cold. It takes ten minutes too for them to finish and process everything and the whole time Will is just waiting for someone to realize what he is and send him back up the street to the prison.

No one notices and no one says a thing.

It is like the overcoming of relief when mass has just started and you can bleed the sins out of your body.

Alana takes them up a few floors and down the glass hall to the Agent in Charge office, the black inscribed words have Will shivering like a criminal passing by the cops on a street. Every few seconds he has to keep reminding himself that he's a free man, no one's going to come looking for him anymore.

Stepping into the office, Will ignores the two other men already in there to stare at the bulletin board of murder on one wall. Photos of the victims are splayed out like a page in a scrapbook of horror, one made from bloody teeth and bones found on the side of the road. With snips of dead animal skins to add some texture. He stares at the pictures hard enough he doesn't realize everyone has been conversing, Will must have made a noise or said something, or perhaps he had become so close to Alana's shadow that no one had noticed him in there at all.

Stepping inches closer to the board, Will feels the dark thing lurking in the back of his skull begin to crawl its way out. Studying the pictures before him he notes a few objectively obvious things; all men, ages thirty to forty never younger and never older, all white, and the killer uses the same blade to gut them. All of them. This is a blade given to them when they were younger perhaps, a gift, and now that gift has turned into a weapon of use. The blade is special.

He inches closer, and sees what no one else can.

"I killed you because I loved you. I kill you because I am scared of you, you did this to me. Raised me, cared for me, nurtured the darkness inside of me until it took my shape." Will breathes quietly under his breath, opening his eyes as his presence comes back to the room.

"What do you think we're looking for? A man with a vendetta against other men, someone who worked with these men? There must be a link between them and the killer, we're just grabbing at air right now." A man's voice comes from Will's back, slowly he turns to look at the other three in the room.

Clearly his throat, Will's jaw tightens when one of the men looks up at him, "You're looking in the wrong pool of suspects."

The other man with dark skin looks up then, " *Excuse* me."

"Our killer isn't a man, it's a woman. White, probably in her early twenties, just left home for college or has been gone for a while. Her fathers dead now, only her mothers left but the relationship is probably a strain. However the father died is not the real truth, she killed her father and the mother covered it up, but now she keeps seeing him everywhere and needs to keep killing him."

The man blinks, shocked at the words coming out of Will's mouth, "And where are you pulling this hunch from?"

Shrugging, Will turns his eyes back to the evidence board, "It's all right here. In the evidence. Our killer loves her father but he's a monster, turned her into a monster before he died, and now she has to keep killing him until it's gone."

"Agent Jack Crawford," The man holds his hand out and it takes Will a moment before he lifts his own to shake it, "And who might you be?"

"Will Graham." Taking his hand back, Will places it back into his pants pocket before turning his eyes to look at the side of Crawford's face, "I'm the guy who killed three people because my doctor decided not to mention my brain was on fire."

The silence in the room speaks for itself.

Tucking his chin to his chest, Will apologizes for his words, "Forgot people don't talk about that kind of stuff. It's my first day out of prison, and Dr. Bloom thought I could use a brush up on manners. Looks like I need a little more than a brush up."

The other man; tall, dark blond hair gelled back so not a string way out of place, high cheekbones and a suit that was brighter than the entire room itself- holds his hand out to Will.

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter.” The man gives him the smile of a snake, “If I remember correctly about your case, your doctor was hiding from you that you were suffering from Anti-NMDAR Encephalitis?”

“Yeah, something like that.” Will sniffs, feeling that tell tale sign of anxiety and the need to run away at knowing he’s in a room full of psychiatrists. He can just tell by the way Hannibal looks over him the man is already planning on the best way to dissect Will’s brain.

“You said you were able to figure this out with a hunch?” Jack pills Will’s attention back to him, “How do I know you’re not just making shit up?”

“Will has an empathy disorder.” Alana discloses, her eyes are open but the tight lip look to her face says otherwise.

Pointing at the photos, Will explains a little more, “I can emphasize with anyone, these photos give me a window view into our killers eyes. I can see a part of the inside but not the whole thing.” His eyes jump from one photo to the other before catching something, “We’re there organs missing?”

Alana drives Will to the middle of nowhere in Wolf Trap where he still has a house there. It's been five years but the Graham’s have a history of always having a backup plan when times are troubling. She fusses and worries, promises to help him get his truck back before the end of the week and tells him not to let Crawford walk all over him.

“Just because he’s in charge of the FBI Academy doesn’t mean he can just offer you a job on the spot and push you around like a trained dog, Will.” She’s standing on Will’s porch and staring at him like a lost puppy she’s about to turn away. Usually it would irritate Will but he

can see that she truly cares about his well being. “Do you need anything else while I’m still here?”

Shrugging, Will glances at the empty house behind him, “I guess it’s too much of a reach to ask if you can get my dogs back.”

Her smile drops a little, “I don’t know if I can, I think most of them have been moved to other families.”

“It’s ok, I wasn’t expecting much anyways. I’ll make do with what I have until then.” Will nods, giving Alana a clear door to leave. She takes it, probably feeling too inconvenient at the moment as she stands there looking like a leaf about to be brushed away by the next big gust of wind.

“Good night, Will.” Alana says with finality before making her way down the porch steps and to her car.

Will stands there, watching as the car headlights slowly begin to disappear into the horizon while the sun starts to set. Breathing out a sigh through his nose, Will opens up the front door only to start coughing at the cacophony of dust that strangles him. Leaving the door open, he goes around throwing open the windows and trying to let most of the dust escape before grabbing some old rags to clean.

In prison, Will did a lot of cooking and cleaning in the kitchens, after getting labeled as not a threat by the workers he was allowed into the kitchen where he helped with cooking. He was able to maintain his sanity by doing the most simplistic of tasks in prison, there weren’t any calendars or even one little clock on the walls to check the time. All you had was the rising and setting of the sun. Cleaning was something that helped as well, if Will wasn’t peeling the skins off of potatoes or chopping vegetables he was scrubbing pots and pans for an hour.

Another thing he liked to do to help pass the time was help some of the other inmates learn to read. It was hard work but it was rewarding in some ways, the prison only allowed them so much freedom and reading was thankfully one of them. After the first week, Will found himself constantly in the library reading or helping shelving the books. There weren’t enough books to last him more than three years before he went through them all so he began rereading through the ones he enjoyed the most.

There was an inmate in there, Butch, as he liked to be called by his friends. He was a short, bulldog looking man who had two daughters outside of those walls that worried about him. The wife had taken the kids away from him and he hadn't seen them in years and he had been wanting to learn how to read properly. Will was distrustful at first but gave in and began helping the man go from reading children's books to at least a middle school level. Teaching to write was a little harder.

After Butch there was Welch, Diaz, Mondragon and many more that came over for help. It gave Will immunity in the prison, not that he was afraid of getting hurt or raped, especially with Matthew lurking around. Will had shown up day one and looked like a ghost which had put people off, made them stay away from him like they could smell his diseased brain. He stuck to himself in his cell or in the shadows of the walls, until Matthew showed up and became his new cell mate.

He read to a few of them, taught others to either read or write and with that he became untouchable. No one wants to fuck with the guy that gave others the opportunity to better themselves.

He scrubs the surfaces inside his house, pulling old rust drawers and wiping them out until it's no longer a hazard of death. Will cleans until the moon is high in the skin and the sky is full of stars, the first night as a free man and he falls asleep on the couch.

A knock on the door awakens Will in the morning, the sun is half up in the sky and peaking through the blinds like it's trying to say hello. Scrubbing the sleep out of his face, Will blinks, wondering if perhaps he had misheard the knock.

It comes again.

"Fuck." Will sits up, ignores his appearance and stumbles over to the front door so he can open it. The light stabs at his eyes as he had forgotten how dark his house was.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham."

Fuck . Will thinks to himself, “You can just call me Will.”

Just what he wanted to see bright and early in the morning, and while he’s wearing nothing but his boxers and an undershirt. And more importantly standing in front of a psychiatrist, especially one like Dr. Lecter who was once again wearing a full three piece suit. This time instead of a dark brown the man went with an buttercream blue suit. A very nice pastel yellow tie to go with it. Really the man looked well put together, and Will would be more than happy to have a conversation with someone who could keep up. But right now all Will wanted to do was go back to bed, and finish cleaning the rest of his house.

Looking down at the older man’s hands, Will’s eyes narrowed when he saw Hannibal holding two food containers.

“You brought food?” Will asked, knowing he probably looked as confused as he sounded.

“Indeed I did. Alana called early, she’s disposed of for the day due to some personal errands, and I thought I might offer my services to you. She mentioned something about your house not being filled up with anything proper. Food wise, at least.”

“Oh, yeah…Thanks.” Will continue to stare at the man’s hands.

“It’s still warm if you would like to eat it now.”

Oh, oh, Will realizes.

“Sorry,” He opens his door, allowing Hannibal to step inside of his house, “I’m still getting the hang of good company and manners. They tend to throw it away once you get into prison.”

The man glances around the place and begins setting the places on the dinner table. Leaving the man to his devices, Will leaves so he can take a piss and wash up. He makes sure to splash some water onto his face before coming back to the kitchen where Hannibal has the

table finished and is taking the lids off their food. It's then that Will realizes he's still practically naked.

Shrugging it off, Will takes his seat and straightens a little when Hannibal sets a cup of coffee down in front of him.

"Where did this come from?"

Hannibal smiles, "I thought you might enjoy some after getting out of prison, I brought it along on a whim."

Waiting until the other man sits down, Will reaches forward to bring the cup as close to his chest as he can. Inhaling the dark roast, hot and bitter under his nose. Brining it to his lips, Will takes a tentative sip being shy to burn his tongue and moans when the flavor fills his mouth. Swallowing down a few mouthfuls, before he sets the cup back down. Following his animal instinct and years of conditioning, Will pulls the bowl of hot steaming food close to him as possible. Keep the food close, keep the food safe from those who want to take it.

He can't even process the flavors on his tongue as he takes in mouthful after mouthful.

A chuckle breaks him of his stupor, and Will looks up to find Hannibal watching him from the other side of the table. The man smiles at him like he hasn't been watching Will eat like a starved animal.

Wiping his face, Will feels embarrassment crawl up his neck in a red flush as he tries to compose himself. He umbles out a short, "Sorry."

"It's alright. I understand that you've been conditioned to do this while you were in prison, although I feel ashamed to have thought that was only something that happened in movies and books." Hannibal picks up his own fork to begin eating his meal, Will watching through the hair that has fallen forward to cover his eyes. Lecter was the perfect example of a man written for the front cover of a romance novel; they had a few of those in the prison library. Proper, old school handsome, rich and eccentric. Something surely to sweep the lady off their feet.

Will didn't trust it. It was like getting distracted by the beautiful pattern on a venomous snake and forgetting it could kill you with one bite. Will has been bitten once before, he's not going to let it happen again.

"Things are a lot more different inside of prison than they are in the movies. For one, there's alot more rape and violence." He sniffs, eating his food in a slower manner. He pauses, "That's not really table conversation is it now?"

"No, but, seeing as that is what you had been conditioned to understand." Hannibal finishes a bite, "If you don't mind me asking, what was your experience been with prison?"

"Dull. They keep you on a sort of schedule there, like rats in a social experiment. Men get sent there and become animals of their former selves, they become violent, blood thirsty things." He takes another bite, keeping his eyes on Hannibal as he talks, "I've seen what happens to people who get in the way of the bigger predators, it's not a pretty sight."

"I imagine so, and for you Will? Did you ever find yourself caught before the bigger predator?" The man's eyes gleam like firestones.

Will scrapes the bowl of the last pieces before finishing it off, "This was delicious, Dr. Lecter. Thank you."

The man beams, "Thank you, Will. And please, there's no need to call me by such formalities. I told Alana that I would offer my assistance to you today, whenever you would like to go into town for groceries and such."

Something does not settle well in Will's stomach at the man's words, he is once again reminded of the beautiful snake asking for his trust and to put his hand in the snake's mouth. He promises not to bite. The concept of being helped like a child that needs to be walked around hand in hand made Will agitated and itchy, like he needed to peel off his skin to be comfortable in it. Will didn't like the way Hannibal looked at him, his eyes watching Will and studying him as if he was checking if Will had any visible weakness. Hannibal was the kind of man that Will would have naturally avoided in prison.

“I don’t need charity.” Will grits out, pushing the bowl in front of him away as he stares down the other man.

Hannibal straightens, a cobra ready to strike, and then he deflates, “I mean no harm or shame when I offer you any help, Will. I am merely just trying to alleviate any irritation you may find yourself without a car right now. I know Alana said she wouldn’t be able to get you your car back until later this week, and I’m sure you don’t have enough food here to serve yourself.”

Leaning back in his seat, Will pushes down the urge to bare his teeth at the older man, “I need to shower first, and put some clothes on.”

“I’ll clean up the dishes.” Hannibal goes back to finishing his meal.

Will forgets what it’s like to work around people who don’t have the intention to harm others or him. He has to remind himself over and over again in his head until it becomes like a song stuck in his head. Crawford treats him indifferently, he sees what gifts Will has to offer and immediately brings him onto the ship and Will is awarded the opportunity of being the new crewmate. A new wayward man to help clean the deck. Alana drives Will back to the BSU where he finds himself getting directed down to the basement with the dead. Jack has them pull some of the bodies out so Will can get a closer look at them. It should be disgusting, staring at four dead men's bodies.

Their stomach’s gutted open like they were nothing but cattle fresh for the slaughterhouse. The meat has been fed well, cared for and given free roam so the meat was tasty. The way the cattle is raised makes it taste either good or can destroy it.

Will is given latex gloves so he can pull open the men’s stomachs and look about in them.

“Martin Stevens is missing his lungs and kidneys. Nathan Shepard is missing his tongue. Lee Bush his whole left left, and of course, Andrew Bridges is missing his heart, right arm, and some of his intestines.” Price rattles off, flipping back the papers he was reading from. None of the scientists know how to act around Will, it makes him wonder how much Crawford informed them on the FBI’s new pet.

Pulling his hands away, Will takes off the gloves and tosses them into the garbage can. All eyes are on him.

“We’re assuming that the missing organs are the killer's trophies. Something to remember them by, but it’s a little weird because none of them are ever the same.” Zeller adds. Will glances at him and the man lifts his chin, already Will can tell that he’s going to have some trouble with this guy.

“They’re not trophies.” Will stares down at the eyes of the dead, “She’s doing something else with the body parts.”

“I’m sorry, she?” Zeller scoffs and turns to Jack, “Who’s this guy again? And why is he here?”

“Will Graham is here because he can see and understand parts of the evidence that we can’t.” This man would say anything other than what he really means, *‘we need help, we’re clutching at imaginary papers now’* . “He offered to help.”

“Ok, but that doesn’t explain why all of a sudden he thinks our killer is a female. How do we not know the killer is a man?” Zeller continues to argue, perhaps attempting to bait Will into violence just so he can turn to Crawford and say, ‘See? This dog is mad and full of disease, we should kill it now before it begins to infect the others.’

Will does not rise to the challenge.

“Men are usually the highest percentage of serial killers, women don’t even come close to touching that study. But this one, this is not a woman killing men because she hates them, she's doing it to honor her father.” He almost wants to say, ‘Honor thy father.’ But holds his

tongue. He's found most people do not find the humor in quoting the Bible while there's a dead man in the room. "Her father loved her but he wasn't a good man, and she became what he wanted her to be. A hunter just like him."

Beverly looks up from where she's been looking over clothing evidence, "You're saying that her father was a killer as well?"

"Yes. A good one too. One that no one would have never been caught, even in death." Will blinks, looking away from the bodies, "Can I see some missing people cases? Maybe woman, young, just about to leave home for college?"

"There's a connection?"

"If I can see one, then perhaps." Will nods his head, turning away and bringing a hand up to scratch at his face. He shaved last night and now everything about him feels weird and rubbery, like a brand new plastic toy.

He gets moved to another room, it's stuffy and dark. Makes Will feel like he is a book shelved for years and has collected layers of dust and spider webs over time. It's suiting enough for him; the small, dingy desk in the corner of the room where Will looks over case file after case file of disappearances in the last few years. Combing for anything of interest or something that will give him another line to link the murders together. The hours tick by, unbeknownst to Will as he pours over the files. Putting the boxes back into their places before grabbing another one down.

It's while he's looking over a case that the door opens, it makes Will flinch and keep his eyes shut tight before slowly opening them back up. Blinking a few times, Will looks up and sees Dr. Lecter entering the room. He looks out of place, like a lion walking into the peacock's exhibit, thinking they are the same.

"Hello, Will, I heard you have been stuck down here since this morning."

"By my own choice." Will nods, turning his attention back to the case file in hand. "Trying to find more evidence explaining the jumps I make is harder than one would think."

Hannibal walks over, looks at the file in hand and then the others, “Missing woman cases? You’re trying to prove that your theory is correct?”

“One of the crime scene investigators thinks I’m pulling rabbits out of my ass. I’m not.” Will sighs and rubs at his face, “I don’t want Crawford to start doubting me but it’s hard to explain what I see when I look at the evidence.”

“You’ve tried before, and it failed?” Hannibal is held in place with interest.

“Miserably. When I was still a police officer in Louisiana, I had given a try to explain how it worked to my coworkers. But it failed, like I was trying to explain what shadows were to a child who did not speak the same language as me.” Will tapped his fingers over the papers.

“Most people do not have the admiration for dark things. What goes on your head must be akin to something like a gothic painting, full of horror and blood.”

“Like teeth rattling in a child's skull. Crows picking at the body of a dead man while mushrooms grow from his broken head.” Will finds himself adding, stopping immediately as he realizes what he said.

Hannibal turns his head only a little, the interest in his eyes flashing like the light of a beacon, “Beautiful.”

Sniffing, Will holds back the urge to sneeze at the dust clogging his nose, but Hannibal’s words seem to catch him like a hook sinking into the skin. He squints, looks up at the man without looking in his eyes, “Are you flirting with me, Dr. Lecter?”

The man’s lips turned into a smile, “Actually, I came here with the offer of lunch.”

“Oh.” Will tilts his head down to look at his watch, “I could probably get a bite, thank you.”

“Excellent. I already have a table for us at a decent bistro.” Will knows he should be suspicious at those words, but he lets it slide away so he can grab his stuff and follow.

Hannibal had a nice car, the dark leather seats, the smell of something woody in the air and the classical music filling the air. Honestly, the car gave Will the blanketing urge to fall asleep. He enjoyed the smell of leather, the comfort and warmth wrapping around him, and soft music to calm the nerves. Will sits up straight in his seat, back straight as a board as he stares out the window. Neither men speak a word on the drive and Will wonders if the man is trying to get Will to stew about the conversation they had earlier. Hannibal never did answer his question, choosing instead to open up the lid of a brand new dish to distract Will from the unfinished one before him. The man was good at what he did, Will could admire it.

They parked and Will followed behind Hannibal as the man took them to a bistro which held the same standards of the rich. Will rolls his eyes behind the man’s back as they are immediately taken to a table once they step into the bistro.

Their waitress sets down the menus and offers them some suggestions for wine. Hannibal answers while Will stares at the menu like it was written in another language. The mirth on Hannibal’s face makes him want to stab the man.

“Something wrong with the menu?” Hannibal finally asks after Will has looked over it at least four times.

“I don’t know what any of this is.” He sighs, most of it is written in French which Will can perfectly read. He is only curious what Hannibal will do as Will offers him this opportunity of control. “You choose for me.”

He pushes the menu away so he can grab his water and sip from it, half lidded eyes watching as Hannibal merely glances over the menu.

When their waitress comes back, Hannibal answers her question, “I’ll have the *Magret de Canard Rôti* and for my friend here, he’ll have the *Filet Loup de Mer* .” The menu closes with a soft noise in his hand as he hands it over.

She leaves in a quiet hurry, leaving the two of them to private conversation. The wine that had been served earlier sits before Will, Hannibal gratefully takes his own into hand. Will is engrossed with Hannibal as the man swirls the wine around in the glass, bringing it close to his nose so he may smell the cold drink before taking a tentative sip. So careful, like one is careful when they are about to sip at scalding soup. The man's usually closed face opens with blossoming delight as the flavor must be agreeable to him.

"I think this might be my first drop of alcohol since prison." Will picks up his own glass, letting it swirl around in his own glass before taking a sip.

"I hope it is as you remember it to be, and more." Hannibal gives him a flicker of a smile over his glass. Will bows his head and drinks.

Their meal arrives shortly afterwards and Will gives thought to who Hannibal might be to have ushered such a quick meal. He doesn't complain, instead studies the plate set before him and the cooked fish. The presentation is beautiful and Will's stomach growls at the sight of the food, knowing he does not have to fear being reprimanded for eating Will picks up his silverware and begins to dine.

It's then, while he is picking away at the small fish bones that something in Will's brain clicks. His hands settle against the cold table, head tilting to the side with realization.

The motion has Hannibal looking up from his own meal, "Will?"

"She's not keeping the trophies," Will says more to himself than to Hannibal, "She's *eating* them."

Will walks around Alana's office two times, searching and sniffing around the place like an old guard dog ready to bite at a moment's notice. Once he's pacified, Will takes his seat

across from Alana, wiping his pants off before leaning back and watching the woman in front of him.

“How have you been since Tuesday, Will?” She smiles like a flower in the sun. It’s too bright.

“You mean, since I got out of prison?” She nods, and Will answers with his own shrug, “Alright, I guess. I got my car back so now I don’t have to waste other people's time with that. My house is empty and I have a job. There’s not much else to say after that.”

“I’m only asking, because I need to know if you’re having any trouble settling back into society.”

Will turns his head away, he’d forgotten what Alana was like when they had their sessions. She was always too sweet and trusting, once in a while she had a bite to her but never hard enough to break the skin. With her other patients she was a psychiatrist first and a friend second, but with Will he could never figure out which way she was leaning when they spoke to each other. She obviously felt something akin to pity for him, her need to help him like he was a puppy left on the side of the road would have anyone grating their teeth. Other times Alana could throw up a wall between them, make their relationship clear that she was only there to help and he was there because he needed help.

This is one of those times where she puts being a friend first rather than second.

“Because I was in a violent place? You’re wondering if maybe that violence might have clung itself onto me before I left?” Will turns his face back to Alana, tired of staring at the bland paintings on the walls of the office.

“Yes.” She fixes her skirt a little, “Prison is often seeing as a place always in a constant state of violence or sexual abuse. I’m worried that your empathy disorder may have picked up the worst traits there, and maybe you didn’t know until it happened at the worst possible time.”

“Most of the time there was a lot of violence going on, but I didn’t experience any sexual abuse. At least, not towards me.” Will answers in a way he hopes will help, “The other day,

Hannibal brought me breakfast and you know what I did? I acted like I was back in prison and I needed to hold my food close, eat it as fast as possible, before the warden came over and started banging the table with his baton."

That part makes Will chuckle, Alana doesn't find it funny. For the rest of the session Will finds himself fading in and out of conversation, they talk mostly about violence and abuse. Two things Will is familiar with. And before their time is up, Will asks what he really wants to ask.

"Alana, I'm curious to know what happened to my dogs. Even if I can't get them back, I'd just like to know if they're safe and happy."

The smile on Alana's face is depressing, "I thought you might ask that. Most of them all got adopted to new families, I think Luna is now a service dog for a little girl with anxiety, and Buster…I'm sorry will, but he died in one of the pounds." Will feels his shoulders sag, "He got out from under a hole in the fence and ran off, some-some men found him and they shot him."

"Did they ever find out who killed him?"

Alana shakes her head, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this session to end on a sad note."

"No, no, it's….it's alright. He was always going to end up getting himself hurt, the little shit always thought of himself as a big dog." She gives him a hug before he leaves, Will stands there awkwardly his hands raised to embrace her but never touching. Almost afraid what'll happen if he does, so he keeps his hands hovering in the air away from Alana's skin.

On the drive back home, Will mourns the loss of his only attempt at family. Taken away from him because of something he couldn't stop before it took over his entire being. Sick and miserable, Will doesn't eat dinner that night. Doesn't wash the day off in the shower nor does he do anything else, he walks inside his poor excuse for a home and takes off his clothes until he's left in his boxers and undershirt.

Climbing into his bed Will lies pliant under the sheets, missing the weight and heat of another person next to him. He's cold, even with the blankets over him he is freezing under the sheets and the sick feeling grows even more.

"Cannibalism is not often the first thought that comes to mind when a killer takes surgical trophies. There's a five in ten ratio of killers turning to cannibalism, and that is usually after a certain amount of kills." Hannibal had joined Will after lunch in the stuffy room down in the basement, the two of them going through records together.

"Cannibalism is a part of human history as much as killing has been." Will's eyes never leave the paper he reads over as he talks, "It's been used as a cure for overpopulation, a means to survive famine, and for some a way to deal with grief. Most cultures have participated in the act of cannibalism one way or another, so a killer turning to such is not that far off the grid."

"Some would say that cannibalism has two forms: social or sexual." Hannibal puts away the file he was looking through and pulls out a new one, "Does our killer need to eat her fellow man out of the need to form some kind of social fullfillment, or is it a sexual fantasy for her?"

"This is a daughter killing the ghost of her father, over and over again. She doesn't see these men as who they are, she sees them only as her father. It's *not* sexual." Will's lips curl in disgust at the word, "Most cannibals are insecure and cannot form normal relationships with other people. Eating their victims gives them power over the dead that they cannot get from the living. She wants to kill her father, she killed him and is now trying to leave him behind but she keeps seeing his ghost."

"But why eat him if she is already killing him?"

Will lets the thought chew in his mind, turns it over and over before opening his mouth, "Reliving the killing of her father isn't enough, how she killed him was an act of passion. It's not how she wanted to kill him, it was to put it in simple terms: an accident. She eats the men, because she is trying to honor her father's death, she can never give him the proper death he deserved in her eyes."

Turning to see Hannibal's face, Will is struck over the head with the look of awe in the man's eyes. The older man was able to keep his face neutral but his eyes were like staring into a wide open door. Will could only look for a mere moment, like an angel trying to behold the sight of God but it was too much even for a being of pure energy. The room feels a little more stuffy than it had before, making Will feel like his head was chalk full of cotton. It made him a little sleepy, eyes blinking just to keep himself awake before he startled at the door opening.

Jack and his crew of lackeys are at the door, an air of dismay brushes in and Will shifts in his seat from the unsettlement.

"There's been another body."

Will holds back the sigh he wants to let out, nodding his head he gets up and follows like a good dog. Hannibal was not far behind him, but the man was an invited guest to this hunting party. Will made a small turn to follow Hannibal to his car, the man said nothing, instead unlocking the car and giving Will a small nod. The drive to the crime scene makes Will's anxiety rise and drop along with his breathing. He watches from the corner of his eye as Hannibal drives silently and moves in carefully chosen movements, careful to not disturb Will.

When they pull into the dirt path that takes them into the woods, Will can't help but say, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen."

"An interesting quote to choose from all of Shakespeare's works. Why that one from Macbeth?"

"I find it fitting for the day we're about to have. We went from lunch to looking through old missing cases, and now, now we are about to step into Hell."

" *Abbandona la speranza tutti quelli che entrano.* " Hannibal quotes, putting the car in park before tilting his head to give Will a wolf smile.

“Dante’s Inferno.” Will huffs, turning to return Hannibal’s smile with his own. “Charming.”

He leaves the car before Hannibal can open his mouth, waiting a moment to allow Hannibal to catch up so they can walk into the horror together. Company always makes terrible things better in Will’s opinion. Hannibal doesn’t bring up the conversation in the car as they step into a clearing where the body was found. This one is different, it's the first thing Will notices, not only that but the killer has changed up the way she leaves her victim.

The man is lying on the ground with a set of antlers gored through his chest, his stomach still cut open from the groin up. Amongst the antlers there is a plethora of white flowers in the man’s gut, it’s completely different from the last kills. Instead of being honored the man is being pinned to the ground, gutted, he is not worth her wrath.

They stand outside of the sectioned off area, Will is glad for the yellow tape preventing him from coming any closer as he feels like he is being drawn to the body. Feeling like a hungry scavenger ready to take a bite out of its new meal. He feels like an outsider trying to look inside someone’s house and see what meal is being fed for dinner, but the window is too high for him to look.

“You can empathize with the victim, right?” Jack comes to stand next to Will.

“Not this far away, I need to be right there to get the full picture. And I can’t have too many people walking around me.”

“Alright.” Jack holds up the caution tape for them to duck under, “Everyone give him some room!”

Will flinches at the loud voice but doesn’t say anything as he steps close to the body. Beverly hands him some gloves that he quietly puts on, while Zeller gives a huff of indignation before packing his stuff up and leaving. Waiting for them to leave, Will steps closer to the body so he can stare down at the dead man. Immediately he looks into those cold dead eyes, and he sees too much and too little all at once. He knows the victim, becomes the victim, is intimate with him in ways no one else could be unless they were the man himself.

Closing his eyes, Will takes a deep breath before stepping into the dead man's shoes so he can walk in them.

His skin feels cold, so cold. Why am I so cold, I should be full of warmth and life but I cannot feel even the wind on my skin right now. Oh, he remembers, I am dead. Dead. Why am I dead?

Opening his eyes, Will finds himself in the shadow of a home that had once belonged to the dead man. He walks inside of the shadowy house and walks through the motions in reverse. The kitchen comes to view as he steps further into the house and Will begins to puppet the movements of cooking breakfast. No. It's not morning anymore. Dinner. He is cooking dinner. Someone knocks on the door and he goes to answer it, wiping his hands clean so he doesn't smudge the doorknob. A young woman stands at the door.

I know her, I have seen her before. She is familiar and I know she is safe, Will thinks, I invite her into my home. We chat and talk, because we are familiar with one another. I go back to cooking and then…

He turns and looks into the killer's eyes.

I take the blunt of my knife and hit him in the skull, he goes down easily but is still awake. Will jumps on the fallen man, ignoring his feeble attempts to grab him as he uses the hilt of the knife to smash it against the man's skull again and again until the body under him goes limp.

I need this, I cannot control this anymore. He is getting too close to me and I need to kill him, I can't be the last one. Arguing his body back to my car, I take him somewhere safe where I can cut the meat and honor the parts worthy. But there's something wrong, I feel guilty. There's something wrong with him and I….I feel bad.

"It's an *apology* ."

Gasping as he awakens from the darkness wrapped around him, Will pulls away, turning his head from the scene as he feels the killer's anger and betrayal wash over him. There's

something wrong with the meat, he thinks to himself. The words rattling about in his empty skull as they echo over and over again. He inhaled the air, coughs like he's choking on it and walks away. The lasting effect of anger burns into his skin and Will is so blind to the latching emotions of the killer he doesn't realize someone's come up to him until a hand rests on his shoulder.

Instinct kicks in and Will grabs at the hand on his shoulder, twisting it in a crushing grip so he can have the assailant stand in front of him. When he sees a flash of familiarity the world begins to bleed with color and sound comes back to his ears.

"Will, it's just me. I need you to calm down." Hannibal says, voice soft and low like he is trying to calm a beast before its rampage.

Looking down at his hand and seeing the white knuckled grip he has on Hannibal's wrist, Will immediately drops the other man's hand and turns away from him. Ignoring the good doctor's words and Jack calling his name, Will begins to walk away from the scene and from everything else. He feels wound up like an old toy finally being played with, its damaged and rusted gears cracking and groaning as they are used once more. It makes him sick and excited.

He walks along the asphalt road until he feels tired and the rage passes. When he realizes how far he's already walked he continues down the road until he hears a car pull up next to him.

There's a stranger in the car, completely alone, the man smiles at him, "You look lost. Need a ride?"

The man was middle aged, white with dark hair, a quick look showed he had a ring on his left hand which probably meant he also had kids. He looked at Will like one looks at a child when they've lost their way in the halls of school, it makes Will tense up with agitation. Releasing the tension from his jaw, Will gives the thought a glance, "Yes. Thank you."

Standing in the back corner of Crawford's office, Will stares at the board of victims while his mind buzzes like cicadas on an afternoon by the lake. Loud, rhythmic pulsing of their nightly calls that cuts away the argument going on between Alana, Hannibal and Jack. Will knows he messed up: grabbing Hannibal's arm like that and leaving a purpling smatter of bruises on the man's skin, along with disappearing right after the events. Alana wasn't upset about that, she was more so upset about Will being brought into an active scene when he hasn't been screened for stability.

"He is my patient, Jack. You can't bring him to a scene and have him empathize with a violent killer, he's been in a gruesomely violent place for five years." She looked like a solar flare with how the anger lashed outwardly towards everyone in the room. It made Jack frustrated like he was a child being scolded, and Hannibal sat there with a neutral face.

"I brought Will there because I know he can handle the kind of killers we're catching, Dr. Bloom." He doesn't say her last name unless he's pissed, Will turns his head a little so he can see out of the corner of his eye a little better. "He's saving lives by helping us catch this killer. We need him."

"You already have more than enough resources presented for you to use, Jack, you can't just pull him into it as well. I know I said it would be fine, but he can't get too close. I am trying to help him step back into society and all you're doing is making him look at a serial killer's aftermath, destroying everything I've worked on."

"I'm sorry, Alana." Hannibal finally chooses the moment to speak once she's let out all her frustration, "I should have stopped it before anything happened, but I trusted Will's judgment to know himself better than we could."

"He *attacked* you."

"No, I made the foolish mistake of putting my hand on him while he was showing signs of stress. I forgot where he came from entirely and had only the forethought to help, Will is not to blame for this situation, I did it myself." Ever the white knight, Will thinks as he fully turns to the three at hand.

“Did we get a report on the flowers in Mr. Cain’s stomach?” He asks, ignoring the glaring look Alana shoots him.

Jack looks between the two of them for a moment, before he answers, “White daffodils.”

“White daffodils can often symbolize an apology; forgiveness, new beginnings, and rebirth. She felt bad for what she did to Mr. Cain.” Will comes to stand a little aways from the three.

“A sympathetic killer.” Hannibal adds.

“Feeling bad defeats the purpose of being a psychopath, doesn’t it?” Jack argues, staring at Will like he is about to reign judgment.

“Yes. It does.” Will sighs, turning his head away so he doesn’t have to see the man’s wrath radiating off of him.

“We’re looking for a specific kind of psychopath then. One who knows how to forgive and has feelings, but still kills.” Hannibal surmises, leaning back in his chair like a lion after a feast, “What kind of crazy is that.”

“She couldn’t show him that she loved him, so she put his corpse back and left her forgiveness with it. The antlers were there because she was angry and regretful.” Will rubs at his jaw, “In some cultures, the velvet on deer antlers are used to promote healing. It’s rich in nutrients. She was trying to reverse as much damage as she could.”

“She loves them like she loves her father.” Jack leans on his elbows, his own brain processing the words coming out of Will’s mouth. “Do you think Mr. Cain knew the killer or was familiar with her?”

“No.” Will lies.

Hannibal finds Will down in the stuffy basement later that day, digging through boxes of files while he tries to find something to connect with. He has some files piled up on the shabby desk Will has come to claim as his own. The man lets himself into the room with a quiet knock, giving Will a moment to prepare himself. Instead of facing the man, he hides himself against the shelves of boxes pretending like he's still shifting through them for more clues. Shoulders hunched in on himself a dog scared to be hit after they accidentally bite their owners hand in a fit of terror.

There's the shuffling of papers as Hannibal looks through what Will has already pulled out, "Already pulling out more missing girls in favor of catching our killer?"

"Yes. It's probably best I at least give it a good try before another body drops, and Jack loses his head." Will puts the box back in its place, inhaling dust and despair as he moves to another one.

"Are you trying to appease him or impress him?" Hannibal sets down the folder in his hand, leaving it open so the smiling face of a brunette stares up at them. Like an ant staring up to the sky wondering, why God, why did it have to be me?

"Neither. If I wanted to impress him I would have caught the killer already. I'm doing this for myself." Will stares at the smiling brunette's face too long, "Are you here because you want to help or because you want an apology for the bruise I gave you? I'm sure your friends must be dying to know whether or not you're in an abusive relationship."

Hannibal smiles, "I don't want an apology, Will. What you did was purely instinct. I did, however, come to offer *you* an apology. I shouldn't have touched you when you were clearly not yourself." He steps closer and Will turns his head a little, a show of the soft pale flesh on his neck, "I'd love to have you for dinner."

Cheeky . Will thinks.

“You touched my shoulder to calm me down and I retaliated by almost breaking your arm. Which prompts you to come down to this dirty, dust ridden hole and apologize, then offer me dinner?” Will shakes his head softly, clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth and wincing at the bitter taste of bad breath, “You are a strange man, Dr. Lecter.”

“Is that a no?”

“Not a no, but I am going to be busy most of this week. Perhaps we can try next week?”

They smile at one another like wolves from different packs who have just found a large dead deer to eat from. Hannibal motions for Will to continue his work and the two of them settle into their pattern of silence as they flip through folders. Smiling faces of young women staring up at them as they flip through page after page, neither men are moved or unsettled by the dead smiling up at them. Will finds a connection hours later, eight women all roughly the same age, same look, disappeared. The only difference is the last victim, Elise Nichols, who was found back in her bedroom a few days after disappearing. Antler velvet found in the puncture wounds in her chest, her liver was removed only to be put back in its place.

He stares at the file too long which ganders Hannibal to turn his attention from his own files.

“Found anything of interest?” The man sets his own file down to get a peak at what Will is looking at. Setting the file down on the desk so the man can see, Will points at the autopsy paper.

“Same wounds, same velvet. But instead of a father it's a daughter who has died.” Will points out each factor, “I think we just found the father.”

“No missing reports right after this one?” Hannibal moves through the files left over.

“He died, probably not that long after this one. He couldn’t contain his love for her anymore and so he was going to kill her, but she killed him first. Adapt, evolve, become.” Will sniffs, closing the file, “We can’t present this to Jack, it’s like trying to create a shape out of shadows. It’s not solid enough.”

“Then we’ll find a way to make it solid.”

He leaves the Beauro late that day, trying to find that golden string of evidence but coming up with nothing but cut and frizzled rope. Will knows he’s grappling at nothing but he can’t help but try even harder to find something. On the drive back home Will finds a stray on the side of the road, rope wrapped around the dog's neck and dragging behind it as it pads along the rough ride. Lost and lonely, exactly how Will feels most of the time. Rolling his window down, Will whistles softly to grab the dog's attention, when he has it he says hello.

Parking his car a little farther up and putting his caution lights on, Will opens the trunk and sits. Tossing out pieces of a sandwich he never ate for lunch until the dog, shy and showing more ribs than Will had when he got out of prison. It’s a sweet, timid mutt. Brown coat speckled with a spattering of dark spots, it-he, is gorgeous. Will waits and holds out the warm meal, those dark brown eyes full of starving hope stare back at him. The dog creeps closer and snatches the last of the sandwich from him, tail wagging low to the ground as he is still worried about being hurt. Shushing and cooing the dog until he has won his trust, Will gets down from the bed of the truck so he can run his fingers through the dog's dirty fur.

When the dog starts getting angst, belly rumbling with hunger, Will hushes him softly and helps the dog into the passenger side of his truck.

“It’s ok, buddy. Shhh, it’s ok.” He soothes, keeping a hand on the dog as they finish the drive back to his home. Will waits until they’re inside of the house before he removes the broken rope tied around the dog's neck, it wasn’t too tight which is a small mercy. The mutt sniffs around as his tail wags behind him and Will pulls out an old small tub to the back porch. The name for the dog comes to him as he’s washing away ticks and dirt; Winston. A nice name for a sweet boy.

Winston curls up against Will after he’s dried off, so desperate for all of the affection Will has to offer. It makes Will chuckle a little.

“That makes two of us.” Will looks around his fridge and pulls out some fresh meat he caught the other day, “Hope you like it fresh.”

Cutting the meat into small cubes, Will washes out an old dog bowl to fill it up and set it before Winston. The dog doesn’t wait a second longer before he’s on top of the bowl, eating it as fast as he can. It makes Will have to force the dog back so he doesn’t upset his stomach, and Will feels bad when Winston gives a soft whine. Worried he’s being punished for being so hungry when it’s not the truth. Once the dog has finished, Will brings him to a room upstairs where he lays out old newspapers and a few towels, as well as a bowl full of water.

“I’ll be right back.” Will runs his hands over Winston’s soft fur, “I need to take care of something first.”

Shutting the door behind him, Will grabs his jacket and keys before heading out to his car.

Will leaves the lights off as he drives to the home of the grieving family, parking his car not far from the house so he can watch. The daughter and mother are on the couch embracing one another, tears rolling off their faces as they let their grief take hold of them. They’re so caught up in their crying they don’t give notice to the other woman walking around in the house, she sets down a plate of food on the coffee table before sitting apart from the family. Will stares at her; dark brown hair, wind chafed skin, roughly the same age if not older as the eight missing girls from three years ago.

She’s the golden ticket. And she’s sitting with the mourning family, comforting them, letting them cry against her shoulder like her hands aren’t covered in blood from the tips of her fingers to her elbows. The young woman shows no signs of distress or disgust towards the family, she is perfectly normal to them, just a family friend who’s there to lend an open arm.

A snake hidden amongst the cattle.

He watches for maybe an hour, noting everything about the young woman before she finally leaves the house. Will waits and then starts up his car and follows behind her until she pulls into an apartment complex. Not planning on staying any longer, Will waits and sees where she parks before making the drive back home. The sun has yet to rise by the time Will gets back home, he dresses down and lets Winston have free roam of the place before falling into

bed. Smiling when he feels the cold wet nose bump against his hand, Will lets Winston up onto the bed for just this night.

Only because they both need and crave touch and affection, Winston offers his own unconditionally. Licking at Will's cheek and hand before settling down, curling in on himself and giving a great huff as he begins to sleep. Will runs his fingers through the dog's fur until he too is fast asleep on the bed.

By Friday, Will starts to feel like an extra on set of a crime show when it's announced another body has dropped. Jack looks furious after finishing a phone call and the whole car is tense, it makes Will itchy and a twitch in his face won't go away as he stares down at his hands. Hannibalnis driving not far behind them and Alana as well, it makes Will want to roll his eyes because this is just what he needs on a Friday morning. Two psychiatrists to attempt at opening his skull up and checking for anything dark and malicious walking around in there.

When they park, Will shakes himself off and watches as the crime scene investigators get to business. They look about as morose as he feels.

Not one to socialize, Will turns to Beverly, "I'm getting the feeling that this body is going to be worse than the other ones we've seen. Anything to add onto that?"

She gives him a sadden smile, watching from behind as Hannibal and Alana join the two of them, "Jack thinks it might be the Ripper."

The Ripper? It doesn't ring a bell. It must show on his face the confusion because Beverly is raising her eyebrows high.

"The Ripper? Chesapeake Ripper? He's been terrifying Jack for years now, especially after his last victim was a trainee of Jack's. You must have heard him at least once?"

Shrugging, Will shakes his head, “They don’t really let us read the newspaper much in prison, and even then they talk out the pieces they don’t want us to read. In case it gives someone an ‘idea’.”

“The Ripper has been haunting the east coast for a long time, if this is the Ripper then that can only mean we need to expect two more bodies to drop so he can finish his sounder.” Hannibal muses.

“Let’s hope we can catch him this time.” Beverly doesn’t sound like she has any faith in that sentence and it piques Will’s interest even more in this killer as they approach the crime scene.

They approach the clearing where a few bystanders are watching from behind the yellow lines, probably the people who found the body in the first place. Will remembers Jack saying something about a group of campers. Not paying much attention to them as he’s let through the tape, Will pulls on the graves given to him and has a moment of deja vu as he appeases the scene before him.

It looks like the creation born from art and violence, something Will had learned from his peers in the Baltimore State Prison. He gives a slow walk around the scene, taking in every detail he can find before standing before the creation.

“His head was beaten in post mortem, the killer suffocated him and then took something heavy and smashed his face in until everything was caved in. And then he put pieces of mirrors into the man’s eyes.” Price says as the team looks over the body, he pulls a flashlight out and points the beam inside the man’s ripped open chest. “Chest was gutted and cut open after death as well, ribs broken and ripped open so the antlers can be shoved inside.”

“Any missing organs?” Jack asks, staring at the dead body like it was the killer itself.

Flashing the light around the cave, Price frowns and turns to Jack, “All organs are intact.”

“So then we’re dealing with another killer.” There’s a moment where Jack’s shoulders relax only an inch.

Will studies the scene before him: a man, presented on the head of a stag with the antlers, mirrors planted in his eyes and chest cavity cut open-not surgically. No organs were removed.

Jack turns to Will, “If our killer didn’t take any organs this time, then she’s not honoring him?”

Will shakes his head, “This isn’t the same killer, he doesn’t care about honoring this man’s death he doesn’t even care about the man at all, the death of this man is just a tool for the killer to craft his painting with. There’s nothing special about him, it's what he represents.”

“And that is?”

“A message. Mirrors in the eye are for reflecting the truth, this killer knows who she is. It’s a warning. She’s getting sloppy and he doesn’t want her to get caught.” Will steps in closer, “The stag head is used to elevate the victim, he had to open him up to show her that he is just like her. She’s not alone anymore,the killer wants to offer his love to her.”

“He wants to be with her romantically?”

“No, it’s not romance that he wants. It’s family. The killer knows she killed her dad, that she keeps killing her dad or at least the ghost of him. He is offering to fill that place and give her a father again.”

“So we have a murderous woman with daddy issues on the loose, and now a murderous guy who wants to be her new father.” Zeller sighs, “This week just keeps getting better and better.”

Unable to give any more insight than he already has, Will leaves the investigators to do their job so he can stand by Alana and Hannibal. His psychiatrist looks at him with worry crossing

over her face, like a mother bird fluttering around her nest worried of predators. Unaware of the cat perched on the branch near her nest, just ready to pounce and fill its stomach with fresh meat. Hannibal stands and studies the scene with narrow eyes of interest, like a critic studying a new kind of painting and unsure whether he enjoys it or hates it.

Will doesn't stay long enough to see Hannibal's decision.

For three nights Will spends his time following Abigail Hobbs around the night. The word, following, is simply putting it light on how Will spent his afternoon nights. Stalking was how he really spent his nights following the young girl around, and if it wasn't because he was making sure she wasn't planning on doing anything stupid- like kill again- Will would have felt sick. A grown man following around a young woman was disgusting, a sickness of its own and one he did not partake in. It made him sweaty and gross, his skin felt wrong and at some points he almost thought about taking his knife and plunging it into his stomach.

It was on the third night when he watched Abigail drive herself to a run down building that had once been a church. The wood on the place looked like it had been through years of service and even more years of harsh weather. The lights still turned on, and Abigail sat in the back row. Her dark hair brushes to cover the sides of her face. She looked like a woman wearing a dark veil for mourning.

Parking his car, Will gets out and stops. He hadn't thought this through, all he knew was that he needed to get Abigail's attention and then…and then what? Talk to her? Scrubbing his face from the crisp cold air, Will decides to just say fuck it and follow through with what he has already.

Stepping into a place of God should feel like he was taking a step into the warmth of an old home. But Will has never been religious, even when his father used to drag him along to Sunday just so they could get a meal after services. Will didn't like the way the preacher seemed to stare a little too long at the young choir boys, nor did he enjoy the predatory looks families gave his father and him. Those families watching Will and his father like they were just waiting for either of them to fuck up so they can throw them out right where they deserved.

Abigail doesn't notice Will approaching her until he's taken a seat right next to him. Giving her enough room to not make it awkward. She looked up and stared at him with confusion, a deer caught in the middle of the road while a car barrels on.

"Do you often pray?" He finds himself asking after they've stared at each other long enough.

"No. I don't really believe in God." She is hesitant to answer but Will nods his head.

"So why come to an empty church if you're not going to ask to speak to God?"

"I like how quiet it is, no one comes here anymore after the place was condemned. Not much comes around here besides stray animals and drunks, but even then it's usually quiet." Abigail tilts her head, once again reminding Will of an innocent fawn. "Do I know you?"

"No. But I know who you are. I know what you've done, Abigail."

Her face is pale as a ghosts, "I-I don't know what you're talking about."

Will clicks his tongue, "You're not very good at lying, we'll have to work on that if you don't want to get caught." He leans back against the rotten pew, "Tell me something, Abigail, do you still see your father when you kill those men or has his ghost finally left you alone?"

She's shaking like a leaf now, eyes wide and full of terror as she looks around like the FBI are about to burst into the place.

"It's just us here, no one else." Will holds his hands up, "I promise no harm will come to you while I am here, Abigail."

"How do you know who I am?" She finally speaks.

“I read about your file, well, your *dad* mostly. Perfectly normal man, normal job, only to die from a tragic hunting accident. But it wasn’t an accident was it? He was going to kill you in the end, wanted to save you for last because you’re his daughter and he loves you so much. But it’s all twisted from the root up, he could never love you like a real father should. He still loves you but in the same way a wolf loves a fawn.” Will watches as Abigail slowly begins to still, the shaking in her hands gone as she realizes what Will is saying to her. He knows, he knows about everything. There’s nothing for her to hide now. “Answer my question, do you still see him?”

When Abigail looks up at him this time she is motionless, a strange calmness washing over her, “You’re the one who killed that man in the woods.”

Will doesn’t admit to anything out loud, instead giving the slight tilt of a nod, “I don’t want you to get caught.”

“Why? I mean, why do any of it? You don’t know me, you don’t know what I’ve been through. And now you’re here, offering to be my new dad- I don’t need you.” She grabs her stuff to leave and Will doesn’t make a move to follow. But as she’s leaving the pew she stops, shoulders sulking as she turns around and comes to sit back down. “You’re Will Graham, aren’t you?”

That catches Will off guard, “How did you know?”

“I read the articles on this website calle TattleCrime sometimes, when I’m bored. And she made an article about you yesterday, while you were standing at your own crime scene. She had a lot to say about your history.” Abigail tilts her head down, “You can understand anyone, can’t you?”

Ignoring the flight of rage in his chest at the knowledge of being written about, Will nods his head.

Abigail let’s put a shaky sigh, “I don’t see him as much as I did the first time. Actually, I don’t think I’ve seen him since the last kill, he’s finally left me alone but I’m-I’m still so

scared of him. I can't get away from him, every corner I turn and every place I live in he's there, he's always there. I hate him."

"But you also love him, why else would you honor him even as a ghost." He points out, eyes turning away from the soft crying face of the young woman next to him, "If you don't see him anymore, why bother killing if he's not haunting you and controlling you even from his grave."

She gets quiet, a sense of rage washes over her before going away just as quickly, "I kill bad men. Mr. Cain was an abusive piece of shit, and I won't let him destroy my friend's life."

"So, you're a vigilante? Charming. I'm sure the FBI are going to have a field day with that." Will begins to stand up, already collecting what he needs from Abigail. Pulling out a small slip of paper, he hands it over. "If you want to talk more, here's my number. I don't want you to destroy your own life Abigail, even if it means saving the life of your friends. Don't kill anymore, and if you feel the urge then talk to me."

He gets close to the door when she talks again, "You're not my dad, and you never will be."

Pausing, Will turns his shoulder, "I know. But the offer still stands, if not in that kind of relationship. Then perhaps killer to killer, take my advice or don't. I'll make sure to visit you in prison after they catch you."

It takes three days before Abigail shows up at Will's doorstep. The sun is already sitting snug at the bottom of the horizon and Winston gives him a notice when the dog lifts his head up towards the door. Will had been preparing some trout he caught earlier that morning for dinner but stopped at the sound of tires on gravel and dirt. Washing his hands up he waits until she knocks before he goes to open the door.

"I don't remember giving you my address." Is what comes out of his mouth instead of the, *'Hello'* he was thinking about.

"You stalked me so I decided to stalk you back. Even Steven." She answers back, eyes roaming around Will's house as she stands at his door. "Plus it wasn't really hard to figure out

where you live, you're pretty boring for a serial killer."

"Killer. Serial means I've killed more than two people." He turns to let her into the house, Abigail kicks the snow and dirt off her boots and smiles when Winston comes over and sniffs her hand.

"Well the internet has other views on what kind of person you are, Mr. Graham. You were in jail for five years because you killed three men, kept one in your freezer with parts missing, and got away with nothing more than a slap on the wrist." Abigail pets Winston's head and rubs his ears before standing up and looking around the house more. Will wonders what she's looking for, evidence of his insanity or perhaps something sharp or blunt to kill him with.

"I think you're downplaying what happened to me." Will continues to work on the trout, cleaning off the scales. Tail to gil. "I was mentally unstable and horribly sick all because my doctor decided not to tell me that I was suffering from encephalitis. All because he wanted to see how long I could go with my brain burning itself before I died. No one really expected me to go crazy."

"So killing them doesn't count if you weren't sane? Kind of hypocritical to say when there are some killers who suffer from undiagnosed mental illness. And by that, if we were to follow your word then they wouldn't be considered killers because they weren't in the right mind." She argues, standing on the other side of the counter and watching him gut the fish. Removing their organs so he can flip them on their backs and remove their spines, checking to make sure there isn't any bone left in there.

"No, you're taking my words out of context. It's like killing by proxy for me because of my empathy, I understand I was killing those people but I wasn't there presently when I killed them. Sure it was my body doing the work, I killed three men who were killers or awful people themselves, never innocent, but I don't accept them as my own. Like ignoring a growing mold in your house until it starts to become hazardous."

He puts the fish in the dish along with some lemons he cut in half, adding in olive oil and adds some spices. Abigail's blue eyes watched his hands work as he crushed some pepper and sprinkled some salt, paprika and a few other spices on the fish.

"You've killed other people before."

Setting the lid on top, Will puts the dish into the oven and sets the timer before turning back around.

“So you believe in god?”

She looks taken aback by this, “No?”

“Why not? God is great and powerful. He kills all the time and people praise him for it.” Will isn’t religious, he likes the aspect of religion and the structure it can bring to many people.

When he was in prison, Sundays were as most of the inmates called it ‘Grilled cheese and Jesus’ day. As that was the day they always served grilled cheese for lunch right after services, Father Cormac was a gentle but strict man that had his tears sagging under his eyes. Gray hair that blended with the walls and his collar was a beacon to what kind of person he was in the prison. No one bothered to bring harm to the Father which left Sunday a day of rest for everyone in the prison.

“If God is real, or if there is a higher being up in the sky then why allow such horrors in the world?” She questions, “Why would he allow my father to become a monster that wanted to kill me? I must be wrong in some way, or maybe even cursed, why else would my father kill those girls.”

“He loved you.”

“He wanted to kill me and then eat me. How is that love?”

Will tilts his head back and forth in thought, “He didn’t want to kill you at first, he loved you- truly he did. Even when he was at his most evil, killing those girls, when he had you pretend to be their friends and other such things, he still loved you. A father’s love can be as cruel as it can be kind, he just ended up being a knife at either end.”

“Are we still talking about God or are we talking about my dad?” She tries to mess with him but Will brushes it off as Winston scratches at the door.

“Would you like to go on a walk?” He changes the subject once more, smiling when Abigail nods her head.

Hannibal finds Will back down in the depths of the stuffy basement once more at the beginning of the week. Will has his glasses shoved into the breast pocket of his flannel, having not expected any visitors as he looks through his many case files. Of course, Hannibal was always the one person he could never really pin down well enough as the man ran with a schedule of his own.

“You’re looking through the Chesapeake Ripper’s cases? Interesting choice since the last time I was down here we were looking at missing woman files.” Hannibal sets his jacket down so he can gander a closer look at the grotesque pictures Will was studying.

“I was curious to see what all the fuss was about the Ripper, and now I can see why.” Will let’s go of the picture he was holding, watching it fall back down into the pile gracefully before turning to watching Hannibal pull up a chair next to him.

“I’m curious what perhaps your mind can see upon glancing at the images of the Ripper’s kills. Maybe something the other Agents can’t see?” Hannibal picks up a picture to look at it himself, not looking at Will like he is trying to brush off his words and act nonchalantly about his curiosity.

“Do you want the honest answer or would you like something a little more appropriate for our work area?”

“Among all things, I prefer honesty even at the worst times in life.”

Humoring the man's curiosity, Will answers, "I think what the Ripper creates out of his victims is something made from true beauty. The Ripper sees the world in a much more different aspect than we can see ourselves, everything to him is in a way art or something that has yet to become art." Will stops for a moment, cheering on the rest of his words before speaking again, "His victims are nothing special, I can't yet grasp how he's choosing them, they're always random. Nothing to ever connect with the other which makes him impossible to catch, he is, in a way, the perfect killer. The victims are swine in his eyes and to better them, he elevated his victims. Turn them into art."

"You don't think he'll ever be caught?"

Will shakes his head, "The only way he'll ever get caught is if he *wants* to be caught. And even then, I don't see that happening in our future. The Ripper, he's something else, something more that makes all these other killers pale in comparison. He's like the kind of folk legend you tell your kids to scare them from wandering in the woods. And because of that, he'll live on in words and memory longer than any other killer will."

The other man is quiet next to Will as he lets the picture in his hand fall to the table. Turning to look at the other man's face, Will is struck silent when he sees a pool of something warm and dark in those maroon eyes of the older man's. The unreadable look Hannibal gives him makes Will's skin buzz with an exhilarating sensation, and heat begins to kindle in the out of his stomach. He feels caught, ensnared into a trap. Like an innocent bug caught in the web of a very hungry spider the longer they stare at one another, Will's body begins to feel more intense heat of emotions.

In this moment he no longer feels like the predator he has known himself to be, stripped away of that power Will now feels akin to a pup rolling over to bare its belly, it makes his jaw grit and teeth grind, he doesn't like feeling weak and the way Hannibal keeps staring at him makes the feeling grow worse.

Snapping the file closed, Will clears his throat, "I was thinking about the dinner I promised you, and perhaps thought Wednesday would be a good day for me to come over?"

The older man doesn't so much as snap about his revere but has it slip away so he can put on a new mask, "I don't believe I have much scheduled that day, unless of course a killer decides to drop us a new present. Wednesday sounds perfect."

They settle their silence for some time until Hannibal decides to reach over and pick a piece of fur off of Will's jacket.

"Picking up strays? I remember Alana mentioning that you have a knack for collecting them."

"I got him last week, Winston, found him on the side of the road. Emancipated and shy. He's very friendly and easy to train." Will nods, glancing at his shirt to make sure there isn't anymore dog hair sticking on him.

Hannibal makes a plaintive noise, "It's strange knowing how kind hearted of a man you are, and yet people try to paint you as some secret psychopath collared by the FBI."

That gives Will pause, eyes narrowing towards the older man, "The *TattleCrime* article about me?"

"I admit, I am a bit of a reader of Freddie Lounds. Only in a pedestrian sort of curiosity, I'm fascinated with the way she writes about these killers with only her words and no science to back it up. Although, she is decent at digging up the skeletons in people's closest."

"Tasteless." Will grits through his teeth.

"Do you often have trouble with taste, Will?"

"My thoughts are often not tasty." Will adds, "Especially when it comes to mediocre writing from a woman who only makes her money from cheap jabs and ad sales."

Hannibal raises his eyebrows, "You read the article I presume?"

“A….friend of mine,” Will decides on the words best used to describe Abigail to him, and this was as close as it got to the truth, “Mentioned it to me and showed me the article when I was curious about what Freddie Lounds had to say. Nothing good that’s for sure, and she seemed to enjoy cutting out a lot of the truth to give a preview to her viewers on what she sees of me rather than what is the truth.”

“Indeed. One can only hope the next time she decides to write about you there will be more truth than lies.” Will snorts at Hannibal’s words, “If it’s not rude of me to say, I did not expect you to have a friend outside of prison.”

“Didn’t have friends inside either. She um, I knew her dad more than I knew her, but her dad died tragically while I was in jail. She’s only visiting me for a bit, catching up really.” Will scratches his chin, “I was thinking of teaching her fishing while she was down here, since her dad taught her hunting.”

“What kind of fish do you often like to catch?”

Turning to look Hannibal in the eyes, Will cocks a wolfish grin on his face as he answers, “Massive fish with razor teeth and colorful scales.”

Will Graham has a dirty secret. He doesn’t brush his teeth as often as he should, honestly the man doesn’t brush his teeth more than three times a week. Less depending on the week he’s having. Will didn’t like the scraping of bristles against his teeth nor the minty feeling of cleanliness that came afterwards. His mouth felt strange after brushing his teeth, sensitive and unnatural, like something that wasn’t his anymore.

Sometimes Will liked to ignore brushing his teeth until his mouth tasted like death and a handful of dirt. It should have been disgusting stewing in his own filth but in prison no one cared about your hygiene, and they never gave you the time for such things. So Will didn’t bother with it much, plus it was only his mouth that he kept dirty. He couldn’t go a day without at least taking a cold shower, Will would sweat through he night and through the day due to being around social situations. Too many eyes, too many people to look and see.

Showering was the closest thing Will felt to feeling heavenly, or even godly. Cleansing your body of the day's filth, ridding the skin of sweat and dirt until you felt like a new person.

He didn't like brushing his teeth, but on certain occasions Will would brush his teeth. Afraid of someone smelling the clotted scent of death in his mouth and wandering too closely out of curiosity, only for them to find a startled animal ready to bite. When Abigail entered his life, Will found himself brushing his teeth more often than not. A nervous fear taking hold of him that the young woman would somehow be able to smell his mouth and scare her off, he did not want her to see what creature was lurking deep inside of him yet. Will could see hers, a young thing that needed nurturing and guidance, while Will's was hidden in the dark depths of his pupils.

She came over often when the sun had begun to kiss the horizon, sneaking into his house like a thief in the night. Grinning as she messed with his bookshelves or joined him in the kitchen where he taught her the proper ways to gut, clean and cook fish. They talked about a lot of things other than murder and blood, sometimes Will wouldn't say anything the entire afternoon, instead listening to Abigail tell him about the wrrk she was having.

She loved her college classes but hated her classmates, her best friend had just gotten a boyfriend which annoyed Abigail because it cut into their time together, and her apartment had a leak in the kitchen sink. Will opened his mouth then to offer assistance in fixing the leak and Abigail smiled at him. Sometimes when they talked Will forgot all about Abigail's tendencies for murder, she didn't look like a killer and those blue eyes of hers still held that youthful innocence in them. She had no dark bone in her body that was a sign of evil in her, but it was there just hidden under skin and muscle. They talked a lot in those afternoons-mainly Abigail, but sometimes Will chimes in and during those talks Will discovers a lot about Abigail Hobbs, more than she lets on.

For starters, she is lost in what she wants to do in her life and she doesn't even realize it. Abigail goes to classes and passes them but has no motive to continue after that, she still doesn't know what she wants to do because her mind is on other things. Abigail has a crush on her best friend, which Will doesn't point out. She's still grieving her fathers death, and doesn't talk about her mother at all. Will is pretty sure the first girl Abigail ever loved and kissed died by her fathers hand, and she is haunted by that same girl every night. If it's not her father standing at the end of her bed then it's the dead girl she loved.

All of which, Will doesn't prod or try to pull into the center of their conversation because then Abigail can turn on him and point out his own flaws.

Will doesn't like it when people come behind him and can't stand having his back to the door. He has a pattern of scars on his body from knives that neither of them mention. He avoids talking about prison more than Abigail avoids talking about her parents. And Abigail probably thinks he's gay when he mentions Matthew a few times.

"Wait, so this cell mate of yours was like your *boyfriend* ?"

Will snorts, " *No* , not in any way like that. Matthew is a cold blooded killer who thought I was innocent but also fucked up."

"But you two were together?" She's helping him make sea bass wrapped in a puff pastry tonight.

"We fucked sometimes, and sometimes I'd let him do other things but it was a relationship. Mainly, I scratch your back, you scratch mine kind of relationship." Will shrugs as he finishes adding the last of the spices and tosses their fish into the oven.

"So you're gay?"

"No."

"Straight?"

Wiping his hands, Will looks up, "I'm flexible in areas where I want to be, but if I find something lacking I lose interest. I can't be in a relationship the same way a normal person would be."

Abigail nods her head, "Your empathy?"

“Makes it easy to read people and know exactly what they want, and then I can never tell if I’m attracted to them or if I am mirroring them.”

“That sounds horrible. Have you ever met someone where your empathy doesn’t mirror them?” She sips at the beer Will allowed her to drink that night, since she still had court months before she turned of drinking age.

Giving it some thought, Will’s brain immediately brings up the image of Hannibal as the two of them are settled together in that stuffy basement room. Their easy conversations and shared glances, the sharpness of teeth when they smile at one another and the way Hannibal never seems to treat Will like he’s a social experiment. Will already had one psychiatrist chipping away at his mind in the dark, he doesn’t need another. Hannibal though, Hannibal was different. There was a charming kind of inky wickedness in his eye that Will had seen reflected in his own.

Letting the thoughts settle in the back of his mind for later, Will gives a one shouldered shrug, “Maybe.”

Abigail gives him a look of knowing.

In retaliation he asks, “How’s your friend handling the death of her father?”

The glare she sends him is full of malice, like the mouth of a snake, “She’s taking it as any girl can take her fathers death, even when he abused her. The funeral was a few days ago. I went.”

“And how was it?” Will settles in one of the armchairs he had sitting in the living room, Abigail settling in the other. They had time to talk while the fish cooked.

She picks at her nails as she thinks, “Boring?” Will raises his eyebrow, “I felt bad? No. I didn’t. I didn’t feel anything, it was like I didn’t even recognize the man was dead, I felt bad for Sarah because she was sad. I didn’t understand why she was crying, he wasn’t a good person. And I, I couldn’t even see him as him. I just…”

Abigail trails off so Will finishes for her, “You couldn’t sympathize with the family's loss because you already knew he was dead. Like the same kind of grief that comes from killing a deer on a hunt, you don’t feel sad because you were planning on killing him anyway.”

“Exactly.”

Nodding his head, Will drums his fingers against the leather chair, “Are you sure you should still be friends with her, Abigail? How are you sure the feelings you have for Sarah won’t go away once they’ve buried the dad and it’s been a few weeks?”

Her eyes narrow at him, a mix of conflict on her face, “What do you mean? That I was only friends with her in the first place because I wanted to kill her dad?”

“Yes.”

She glares, and Will sits back in his seat. His own eyes are blank and impassive as he watches the conflicting emotions run through Abigail’s face.

“I hate you.” She settles on.

“Ok.” Will takes a sip of his own beer and neither of them talk for the rest of the afternoon.

Wednesday comes faster than Will can keep up with, and by then it is only when the clock strikes two in the afternoon does he realize what day has come upon him. At the sight of the clock, Will leaves the dust-ridden files to collect some more so he can shift through the clothes in his closet; he's never been invited to dinner before. Not even before he had been sent to prison, Will feels almost ruffled as he finds something suitable for tonight. He’s not

used to these kinds of social excursions, people expect certain things out of theme and Hannibal is no different from that. Picking out what is the most suitable for dinner, he almost has the urge to run out and find a suit but Will knows that would be feeding into the dark animal curled around Hannibal's legs. Will doesn't know what to expect out of Hannibal when it comes to their relationship, or what Hannibal wants out of it.

Sometimes when he looks into the older man's eyes, Will thinks he can see his own monster reflecting back at him when he tries to look under the mask Hannibal wears. And then with another glance, Will sees nothing but a charming man from Europe who has a sort of attraction towards Will.

He showers, trims his beard and makes sure to wipe away any residual dog hair on his clothes before putting them on. Will even goes as far as to slick his hair back before pulling on a winter coat as he leaves, he left a key hidden for Abigail to use when she comes to feed Winston. The dog had been eating well under Will's care and no longer could see the dog's ribs.

The car radio is turned off while he drives so that the only sound is his own thoughts and the outside of the car.

Driving up the parking lot, Will scoffs when he sees the miniature castle Hannibal lived in Baltimore. There was no way he should have expected Hannibal to live in anything less, if it weren't for the paisley ties and the way he spoke then Hannibal had to show himself off with the rich house he lived in. Sighing, Will grabs the wine he had picked up on the way before making it up to the steps of the doctor's door. Knocking on the door, Will takes a step back and waits.

Hannibal opens the door wearing a dark blue suit with a maroon dress shirt, the man smiles, "Good afternoon, Will. I'm so glad you could make it."

Handing over the wine, Will says, "I brought some wine. People usually bring that kind of stuff to dinner."

"This is a first for you I presume?" Hannibal checks the wine, "A French Chateau? This will go lovely with our dinner, thank you Will."

Entering the house, Will glances around and notes all the certain peculiarities and items Hannibal keeps around his house. The man certainly had the strangest taste in fine living, what really drew Will's eyes was the painting of Leda and the Swan. A beautiful painting with a cruel story.

"Do you enjoy art, Will?" Hannibal comes into the dining room with two plates in hand. Both filled with steamy hot food that have Will's mouth watering just at the smell alone. Hannibal sets them down and then comes to stand by Will who had been staring at the painting for some time.

"Hard to appreciate something I've never seen in a museum before. But there were a lot of books in prison, a few were filled with paintings and their history and I found myself reading through those like I read through the rest." Will moves to take his seat, straightening when Hannibal pushes in his chair for him.

"Did you often use books as a pastime in prison? Or were there other activities you partook in?" Hannibal uncorks the wine Will brought, giving the head of the glass a good whiff before pouring for the both of them. He comes around to the back of Will's chair so he can lean in close to the man's space and pour it. Will finds the older man to get curiouser and curiouser.

"Mostyl reading, there's not much else to do there besides get into fights or what people fight. And I didn't have much interest in that kind of violence. It's all rather dull if you were to ask me." Cutting into his food, Will lifts the fork up and asks, "What am I about to put into my mouth, doctor?"

" Mushroom and spinach stuffed cow heart." The man answers, taking his own seat at the table and cutting into his food. Taking his bite of the cow, Will closes his eyes as he chews on the first bite.

Will swallows and then pauses.

"It has an…interesting flavor." Will opens his eyes to find Hannibal watching him, the man chewing on his own slice. "Not the kind of bovine meat I'm used to."

They both take another bite and the taste only goes further to confirm what Will has put in his mouth. It doesn't stop him from finishing the rest of his meal, but it does make him interested in the kind of person Hannibal is hiding.

"Have you ever eaten cow heart before, Will?"

"I don't remember what much tastes like before prison, Hannibal. Much less cow heart above all. I do, happen to know a little about a particular brand of pork." Will sees a flash in those eyes and shivers in delight at the game the both of them are now playing with one another. It was like footsies but between two murderers. "It was something you got on special occasions in prison."

"And would you often join in on these special occasions? Or did you like to watch them?" Hannibal was in a curious mood tonight as well.

"Never watched, where's the fun in that." Will sips his wine, "I did enjoy sharpening my teeth on bone."

"A lion amongst sheep. You are full of surprises, Will, often when I imagine you in prison you are nothing but a timid man hiding close to others shadows." Hannibal polishes off another bite, "I see now that I was very wrong in this observation. But I do have to ask, what were your thoughts on this special long pig?"

Taking another bite of the cow heart, Will smiles as he intentionally makes sure to let Hannibal have full view as he eats the meat. It simmers and melts on his tongue, causing his toes to curl at the taste, "They didn't serve it not nearly as much as I would like them too."

The two of them smile at one another like wolves amongst a kill, and Will continues on with his meal with a much more upbeat attitude. Once they're finished with dinner Hannibal collects their plates so he can bring out the dessert he made for the night. Hannibal asks Will to move to the living room where he can drink some whiskey from the tray he has left out. Will does as he's told, entering the living room Will eyes the canters of golden whiskey sitting on the tray before his eyes then turns towards the fireplace. He has one in the house in

Wolf Trap but Will hasn't cleaned it out since getting out of prison and hasn't used it in a long while.

Following his gut, Will goes and checks out the fireplace to see if he can get it started. It only takes a few logs, some crumpled up newspapers and with a strike of the match he has the fire going. Wiping his hands onto his pants, Will steps back so he can admire the now burning fire.

"You got the fireplace going." Hannibal notes as he enters the room.

"I hope it's not too much trouble that I did." Will takes his seat in one of the dark arm chairs. Hannibal sets a plate down for him, and then picks up two short, fine cut glasses to set down next.

"Not at all. I think it brightens up the room." Hannibal looks at the wide selection before him, glancing up at him before he finally picks one. "For dessert, I have made for us a traditional Turkish dessert, Baklava. And for the drink, an aged Macallan. In the Mediterranean and the Middle East, baklava is ubiquitous. Though it can be made with many variations, the essential parts are the same: paper-thin layers of phyllo pastry, a sweet filling made with chopped nuts, and a coating of honey or syrup. Most people believe that the Baklava we eat today was created by nomadic Turks in the 11th century, this and the Turkish word *yuvgha,* which means pleated or folded bread. However, these early nomads didn't always have access to ovens, so they weren't making sweet baked pastries. Instead, their *yuvgha* was a thin, unleavened flatbread made in a pan over a fire. It is believed that this practice of layering *yuvgha* later evolved into baklava. "

He pours their drinks while Will watches silently. The man continues to talk once he's settled down into his own seat.

"The way we bake Baklava now had been created by Suleiman the Magnificent, a 16th-century sultan who ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1520 until his death in 1566. Because the Ottoman Empire was constantly expanding its borders, the military was a very important asset. During Ramadan, Suleiman the Magnificent started a tradition of presenting each Janissary regiment with trays of baklava for the soldiers. After the presentation, the troops would march back to their barracks in a parade known as the Baklava Procession. The following day, the soldiers marched back to the palace to return the empty trays. The baklava that lent its name to this ceremony was likely similar to the baklava that is commonly eaten

today: sweet, made with many thin layers, and consumed as a delicacy. This makes sense, as the imperial kitchens at Istanbul's Topkapi Palace, where the sultans resided, would have had access to the time and resources necessary to craft delicate, finely-layered baklava."

"Interesting." Will studys the dessert in question, "I never thought about a desserts origins, but I also haven't had much time to think about it as well. You're a man full of knowledge, Dr. Lecter."

" A library of wisdom, is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to it. Whoever therefore claims to be zealous of truth, of happiness, of wisdom or knowledge, must become a lover of books."

"Plato?"

Hannibal sips at his whiskey, then tilts his head in admiration, "You're a very well read man, Will."

"I know. Some people find it hard to believe what kind of knowledge is kicking around in my head." He jests, taking a bite out of his dessert. Enjoying the baked, nutty flavor on his tongue that mixes well with the whiskey.

Will finishes his dessert and watches the fire dancing before him. The warmth of it kisses against his skin as he settles before it like a beast in the sun. Hannibal stands from his chair so he can add another log into the fire. The man had shedded his suit jacket and vest earlier before entering the room, he looked almost naked without the two. A bareness that shows a kind of attractiveness to it. When the man comes to sit back in his chair, Will stops him by raising a hand up.

"Come here."

The man cocks his head like a curious wolf but does not dare to ask or argue with Will. Instead stepping closer to Will until he is standing by the man's knees. Reaching up, Will takes hold of Hannibal's tie in a haphazard kind of way. The man doesn't so much as stumble forward, fumbling is too common of a way to describe how Hanibal gracefully falls down to

his knees before Will. Maybe it's the wine or it's the whiskey, but Will thinks Hannibal looks attractive like this. There is no such sight to bring someone pleasure than a grown man on their knees before you.

Will envelops Hannibal's face then with both his hands, rubbing his thumbs under the man's sharp cheekbones as he does so. The older man's eyes seem to flutter close momentarily at the soft touch, it makes Will ponder the thought on how many times Hannibal has allowed someone to touch him before today. Did he ever let someone touch him? Perhaps the man will allow a handshake or two and maybe even he'll allow an occasional hand on his shoulder. But not for comfort. The man is aware of everything that happens around him, how close someone is or how far away they are, just so he can avoid arms brushing against his own or someone leaning in to his space. Hannibal probably only allows a hug only when it looks like he needs it, but never when he wants it.

And yet, he bows and lets Will touch and mold him into any way he desires.

"Let me see your teeth," Will starts, pulling Hannibal's bottom lip down so he can push one of his thumbs into the man's mouth. Reaching into the back so he can touch Hannibal's molders and then pull his thumb to the front, letting his skin run over the sharp teeth. "You can tell a lot about a predator when you look at their teeth. I wonder what yours will tell me."

Hannibal's hot breath begins to make Will's skin start to collect perspiration on it.

"I don't have much knowledge on land animals, but fish is where I have the most expertise. And you, I can tell already you would be a great predator of the deep. Not a shark, those are too common and you are anything but common. I'd think maybe you'd have been something with poison in it like a lion fish- they are pretty dangerous, could kill a grown man with just one cut. But no, not yet close to what you truly are."

Pressing his thumb down against the man's teeth, Will sighs as he holds back the urge to cut his finger on those sharp teeth.

"A deep sea creature, some ancient and forgotten by most. But you are a danger to everything around you. Maybe an angler fish? With that pretty light to lure in it's prey just so you can swallow them up, what with your pretty suits and charming personality." Will shivers when Hannibal's tongue touches his skin, "I know what you'd be, a blue ringed octopus. They

don’t exactly have teeth, instead they have beaks to eat their prey. It’s a poisonous Hapalochlaena, and touching one can be extremely fatal. There have often been studies on how octopuses eat each other. That’s what I think you are, Hannibal, one touch from you is fatal to anyone else.”

Will pulls his hands away, and Hannibal’s eyes open then.

“If I’m to be a poisonous hapalochlaena, Will. Then perhaps what kind of sea creature do you see yourself as?” The man leans in close. “Another blue ringed octopus, or would you be something else?”

“I think that’s more of a second date kind of question, Dr. Lecter. And this isn’t even out first.” Will begins to stand, Hannibal following to stand as well.

“God forbid we become friendly with each other.” Hannibal’s mouth twitches.

“I don’t find you interesting, Hannibal. Not even with the few glimpses I’ve gotten when I looked under the mask.” Will’s head tilts to the side as he watches a flash of vexation on the older man’s face. “You’re predictable, Hannibal. And there’s nothing interesting about watching a lion in a zoo exhibit.”

“I think you’re being rude, Will.”

“Oh? My apologies, Hannibal, I meant no offense.” Will gives him a cheeky smile, “Goodnight, Hannibal. Until next time.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Friday morning starts with Will waking up to his phone going off over five times, his mouth taste like spiders had crawled into it last night and died and there is the most beautifully painful headache blossoming. Eyes cracking open like a wooden door, Will rolls over with a groan as he reaches to check who the fuck is calling him that morning. Of course, it would be Jack Crawford who else would be calling him. Unless it was Alana asking about his next appointment but even then she would have sent an email. And Abigail only texted.

Sighing, Will winces as his headache decides to cut straight through his brain when he picks up the phone.

“Graham speaking.”

“I’ve been trying to get in contact with you for the past half an hour.” Jack’s temperamental voice comes through the other line.

“Didn’t have my ringer turned on.” He doesn’t apologize because he truly couldn’t care what Jack has to say.

“Put your ringer on next time. Freddie Lounds ran an unconfirmed story that the Chesapeake Ripper may already be in custody.” Jack cuts off to what is important and it immediately has Will waking up. “I have a car coming to pick you up so you better get your ass out of bed and be ready.”

Jack hangs up before Will can respond. He doesn’t try to think of any good responses or justify the disgruntled feeling he has, instead he chooses to get up so he can swish some water around in his mouth. Drinking hard whiskey last night while he watched Winston frolic around the yard. Now he has to suffer massive consequences in the form of a headache. Spitting the water out, Will dresses and feeds Winston before waiting outside. Seeing an all too familiar Bentley roll up to his house makes Will want to make a show of rolling his eyes, but instead he fixes his jacket and goes to the passenger side.

“Good morning, William.” Hannibal’s pleasant voice has Will relaxing against his better self.

“Just Will. The only people who call me William was my dad, and he passed away years ago.” Will shifts in his seat, straightening when Hannibal hands him a thermal.

“I’m sorry for the loss, I know my words do not mean much as it was years when he died. But I understand the feeling of losing one’s parents.” Hannibal’s voice was for a moment devoid of any feeling before it came back all too quickly, like zipping up a jacket before stepping outside into the cold. “I brought some freshly brewed coffee for you.”

“Thank you, I didn’t have time to make any.” Opening the cap, Will inhales the dark roast and takes a drink from it. The heat of the drink fills him from the chest up and Will hates how easy it is for him to settle in Hannibal’s presence after his stomach is full of warm food.

“Would it be wrong of me to presume that you also hadn’t time to eat?”

“No, it wouldn’t. But knowing I am about to head into a crime scene I don’t think it’s a good time for me to be eating anyways. The coffee will hold me over until lunch, thank you.”

Hannibal’s petulant rise in his shoulders has Will huffing, “You should make sure to at least have three meals a day to rebuild the healthy weight lost in prison.”

Will doesn’t answer with a response and the rest of the car ride is left off with silence between the two of them. Reaching their destination, Will feels a wave of unbidden fear wash over him when he glances at the horror filled walls of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. A hindbrain thought kicks and scratches about in the back of his mind, terrified that this is it. His freedom had come to an end and they were going to sack him into a cage once more.

“You seem nervous.” Hannibal parks the car, turning to give with a cursory glance over.

“I’m always a little nervous going into one of these places. Afraid they’ll never let me out again.” Will admits, and Hannibal graces him with a half smile.

“Don’t worry. I won’t let them take you.” Take you from me, is left unsaid between them.

They step out of the car together, where Jack is already waiting for them. A foot tapping gives off the sign of impatience and rudeness, it makes Will’s lips pull back a little into a snarl before he quickly wipes away. No one says anything as they follow Jack inside of the building, the gloom and doom of the dark gray walls give off an oppressing feeling like heavy boots walking all over your body. It makes Will’s muscles tense until they are nothing but tightly wound coils ready to spring up and attack.

They’re walked into an office where Will guess the head of the institute must be waiting.

Introductions are made, and Dr. Chilton looks all too happy when he hears the name Will Graham. He reaches his hand out for a shake and Will stares at it like an untrained dog. Even aware of what should happen in this, Will doesn’t raise his hand because it’s much more fun to watch that light of joy in the doctor’s eyes get snuffed.

“Ah, yes.” He pulls his hand back, looking disappointed, “I had heard you had just gotten out of the detention center. I guess they don’t do handshakes there do they?”

“No. But they are more inclined to biting and throwing throat punches.” Will raises his eyebrows and watches in amusement as Dr. Chilton is quick to step away from him. Hannibal’s own amusement is as clear as the blue sky from where he stands next to Will.

“I read your paper, the one you published before getting sent to prison. The standard monograph on determining time of death by insect activity; it was very refreshing to read to say the least.” He gives a nod to the badge at Will’s hip, “I’m surprised they’d give you a temporary badge.”

“He’s helping to consult on cases with us.” Jack adds in looking almost like a man showing off his best pony. “Doctor Chilton, we need to see the crime scene while it’s still relatively undisturbed.”

“For something so disturbing, I assure you it’s undisturbed. Medical personnel made sure Nurse Shell wasn’t alive and came right back out. The infirmary has been sealed off until you get there.” Chilton takes his seat, fixing his suit and staring at the three of them. Hannibal and Jack occupy the two seats while Will stands behind them.

“Why was a nurse left alone with a prisoner in a high-security psychiatric hospital?” Will crosses his arms over his chest, face turned towards the windows instead of staring at the doctor.

“For the two years since he was brought here, Gideon behaved perfectly and gave every appearance of cooperating with attempts at therapy. As dictated by our present administrator, security around him was slightly relaxed.” The man explains.

“Your present administrator?” Jack then asks.

“I imagine after an incident like this one, she won’t be holding that position much longer.” Chilton states, then adds, “I can’t help feeling responsible myself for what happened. I had sessions with Gideon for years. He sat directly across from me and I had no idea what he was hiding. And now one of our staff is dead.”

Will almost wants to laugh at that, knowing the danger that lurks in the room.

“Graham needs to see the crime scene in as much privacy as possible.”

“Of course, I was assured that you would cooperate on procedures.”

Eyes turn to him now, “I will, but I need to be alone.”

“Ah, yes. That thing you do. You are quite the topic of conversation in psychiatric circles.” Again that spark of excitement is ignited back into Chilton’s eyes.

Will turns his head, hackles raised a little, “Am I?”

“A unique cocktail of personality disorders and neuroses that makes you a highly skilled profiler.”

Hannibal straightens up, “Unfortunately, Dr. Chilton, Will is not here to be analyzed. And I do not believe it is in your best interest to push anymore.”

Give it to Doctor Lecter to create a wall surrounding Will to keep out anyone else who would want to try and get even a bite at Will’s mind. Possessive, Will notes, of things he likes to think are his. Even when they aren’t.

“Perhaps he should be. We’re woefully short of material on your sort of thing, Mr. Graham. Would you mind talking with some of the staff -- no, no, not this trip. Dr. Bloom was very severe with me on that point. We’re to leave you alone. Maybe a special visit?”

“I’d like to see the crime scene now.” Will finalizes the conversation, cutting anyone off from trying to add anything else.

Chilton leads them down the halls of the BSHCI where the dishonest yellow walls lead them on with a lighter feeling than the place would have you believe it.

As they walk through the halls, Jack asks, “Gideon was restrained?”

Chilton nods his head, “Handcuffs. Concealed a fork tine under the flesh of his palm and used it to pick the lock.”

“Where is he now?” Will continues.

“In his cell. You’ll note the removal of organs and abdominal mutilations are all consistent with the Chesapeake Ripper. As is the distinctive brutalization of the corpse.”

“Chesapeake Ripper is still at large.” Jack argues, not believing Chilton still.

When they get to the last gate, Chilton turns towards them before opening it, “What I’m about to show you, I believe suggests otherwise.”

The three of them follow Dr. Chilton into the room. As they enter they slow their approach, taking in the horror of what is waiting for them here. Will blinks at nurse impaled in the middle of the room with several broken frames from privacy curtains shoved into her body. The blood trickles down from her skin and to the floor, still bleeding, a light echoing ‘plip, plip’ quiets the room.

“The reason you failed and kept failing to catch the Chesapeake Ripper is I already had him.” Chilton lifts his chin up like a cat proudly showing off its kill.

Jack sends the man a scathing look before ushering the rest of them out so Will can have the room to himself. Taking off his glasses, Will gives a glance to Hannibal as the man closes the door. They share a knowing look between the two of them.

“You don’t believe Dr. Gideon is the Chesapeake Ripper?” Hannibal asks on the drive back to Wolf Trap, Will quietly settles in the passenger seat.

The question makes the man huff a laugh, “No, no, Dr. Gideon is a cheap knock off of the Ripper. I can feel the Ripper, and see it in the nurse’s mutilation, but I don’t feel it. It’s not the same from the pictures I’ve seen.”

“Chilton and Jack would disagree with what you have just said.”

“Well they’re not the ones with an empathy disorder.” Will says almost petulantly, “Gideon is so absolute that he believes himself to be the Ripper that it makes it almost easy for him to fake. And I know that when the real Ripper reads Mrs. Lounds article, they’re going to be pissed to know someone’s trying to take their work.”

Hanniba’s eyes squint a little with mirth, “I suppose time will only tell if the Ripper decides to take this as an opportunity to reclaim the title, or if he will let Gideon take it from him.”

“He won’t let anyone take it away from him, that’s for sure.” Will says, rubbing at his jaw, “The Ripper has a…”

Will’’s words trail off as they pull up to his house and another car is already sitting there, a familiar one. *Shit* , he thinks.

“Expecting company?” The mirth in Hannibal’s voice is quick to drop at the sight of another car.

“No, I-she should have texted me. I’m sorry, I need to go.” Rudely, Will gets out of the car without saying goodbye to the good doctor and makes his way to the house. The dogs are going crazy inside, barking up a storm as he approaches the door while pulling his keys out.

Checking the lock on the door first, Will sighs when he sees it’s already unlocked and steps inside. Petting Winston and giving them a glance over, Will sighs and motions for him to settle down when he spots Abigail sitting in one of his chairs. She has one of his old college books bent in half between her hands, a cooling cup of what smells like coffee by her side. By the amount of dog ears and writing in the book, Will can only guess that the book she’s reading through was his copy of *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Turning to glance out the window, Will relaxes when he sees Hannibal’s car is already gone which means the two of them alone without any nosy pest.

“You could have texted.” Will sighs, reaching to pet Winston when he comes back over looking desperate for attention.

“And you could have picked up your phone.” Abigail closes the book, giving him that rebellious smile that seems to make it’s trademark on most young women. “Who’s your friend?”

“Don’t worry about it. What are you doing here again? I thought you were going to the movies with your one friend, uh, Rebecca?” Will straightens up.

Abigail scratches at her arm, a storm brewing on her face as she avoids looking at him, “She ditched me for Micheal.”

“Ah.” Will nods in realization, “Let’s take Winston out.”

Abigail shuffles to put her boots on and her overcoat before following Will out the backdoor, Winston immediately runs out in front of them. Happy and barking at the few squirrels lurking around the yard, chasing after them until they make their escape up a tree and the dog is left at the bottom with his tail wagging. Immediately growing bored, Winston leaves and goes to sniff around so he can find the right spot to piss while Abigail and Will stand around.

“I’m guessing you’re upset about Rebecca then?” Will says, watching Abigail immediately cross her arms over her chest and glare ahead.

“I want to *kill* him.”

“Of course you do.” Will laughs when she turns that hellion gaze towards him. “From what I’ve gathered, you didn’t really have a chance at asking Rebecca out anyways. She’s straight isn’t she? And you’ve been close friends since the start of college, roommates first and now you share an apartment together. And you grew attached to her because she was a stability in your life while you were still spiraling from your dad’s murder-”

“Will you-” She huffs, a great puff of white air blowing up in her face, “Stop doing that mind reader thing on me. It’s fucking weird.”

“It’s not really something I can turn off.”

She kicks snow under her feet, glares at the sky and then turns her anger towards the woods. After minutes of silence standing between them she gives up on her anger, shoulders sagging as she lets out a great big heave.

“Fine. Fine! Yes, you’re right about all that. But I don’t know what to do! I-I want to kill Micheal, sometimes I think about it so aggressively when I’m lying in bed that it bleeds into my dreams and I can’t tell if it was just a dream when I wake up or a memory. It’s always so real. Like I can feel the warmth of his blood still on my hands, the last breath escaping his mouth.”

“Would you kill him like the other men?”

Abigail is quiet as she thinks on this, and then shakes her head, “I would hide his body. He’s not like the other men that I’ve killed because he’s just a pest, like an invasive species infecting the woods with its diseased beauty.”

“And afterwards, when he’s dead and Rebecca is mourning the loss of her boyfriend, what then? Will that make you happy that you have her back? Does killing Micheal give you some form of control over Rebecca?”

“No. It’ll make me feel guilty because she’s genuinely happy with him. I hate when you do this stuff.”

“What?” Will blinks in confusion.

“When you give me sort of helpful but cryptic dad advice. I hate it because you end up being write, but you’re all weird and omniscient about it.” They both smile when Winston comes running back up to them, nosing against Abigail’s legs until she reaches down and pets him. “You’re weirdly good at being a dad.”

“I’m not your dad though.” He points out.

“No.” Abigail laughs, “You’re just some weirdo who got out of prison and decided to fill that space.”

“I’m not weird.” She snorts and Will glares, “I’m not!”

She opens the back door to let Winston inside, following right after the dog and kicking the snow off her boots. They remove their coats and boots, Will immediately going to the kitchen to see what he has in the fridge and sighs when there’s nothing but beer to stare at. Stepping away, Will turns to see Abigail has gone back to reading.

“Do you want to order pizza?”

Abigail looks up, “Can we watch a movie as well?”

“Uh,” Will scratches his head, “Yeah, sure. I can’t remember the last movie I watched since prison.”

“What didn't they let you guys watch movies there?”

“No they did, it was just I’ve either seen before or things I had no interest in.” Will shrugs, “I’m going to shower if you want to order the pizza, I’ll eat whatever.”

He makes sure to pull a twenty out of his wallet while Abigail excitedly begins to look up pizza places on her phone. Checking to make sure Winston has enough food he leaves to go upstairs where he has most of his clothes, and the shower lays in waiting for him. Pulling out his phone, Will smirks when he sees a few text from Hannibal.

Dr. Lecter: *I hope everything is going well with your unexpected guest.*

Dr. Lecter: *Would you be opposed to dinner later this week? Perhaps to discuss our newest case, if not to have simple conversation.*

User: *Just a family friend dropping by to complain about her love life. Not much fun other than that.*

User: *Simple conversation? There's nothing simple when it comes to you.*

Leaving his phone on his nightstand, Will goes to the bathroom where he lets himself get washed away in the scalding warmth of the water. He scrubs off the remainder of the BSHCI off his skin, letting the dark, clamminess of decaying minds wash away. While he washes himself clean Will thinks about the interviews they had with Gideon earlier that day, he knows with his heart that the man is not the Ripper. But the conviction in Gideon's voice made Will almost second think about his confidence, however, no matter how many times Gideon said he was the Ripper- Will didn't feel it. He couldn't feel the Ripper at the scene like he did staring at the photos of the Ripper's past tabeula's. Gideon was nothing but a cheap mockery of the Ripper's work.

But the thought of the Ripper getting a whiff of this, seeing his work being recreated in the most childish of ways. Will wanted to see what actions the killer would take at seeing what has been done of his title. He was desperate to see the bloodshed and carnage that would come with the Ripper's next three sounders.

Quick was is mind to turn from thoughts of violence and unto Hannibal. The man was slippery like a snake and Will could only ponder what kind of monster the older gentleman was; he knew Hannibal was not one to shy away from eating his fellow man, he thought of himself as greater than other people but not narcissistic enough to think of himself as a god, but underneath the layers of clothing the man wore Will could see the faintest traces of a monster lurking under there. The idea of finding someone as dark and horrid himself excited Will more than anything but he found himself dancing away from getting any closer to Hannibal than what he saw on the surface level. Trust was something Will found difficult to give away like free handouts. And to trust another killer, oh it was such a hard thing, like pressing a doubled sided blade to each others chest waiting for the other to stab you or themself. Thinks like this always played out like a Shakespearean play, tragedy and love often don't mix unless it was a comedy. And Will did not live a comedic life.

Turning the shower off, Will dries himself and then wraps the towel around his waist before going back to his room. Searching through his clothes, Will pulls on an old sweater and some pants to go with it before joining Abigail downstairs. She had the pizza set out on the counter, shoving a piece into her mouth while she had the laptop set up with a movie. Grabbing a plate, Will holds back on making a comment about her leaving grease stains in the furniture.

But then he was reminded that he now owns a dog with long fur, so the furniture could deal with some grease stains when they were already covered in fur.

“What movie is this?” He settles down on the other arm chair, Winston coming around and lying down at Will’s feet.

“The Princess Bride!”

“Never seen it.” Will chuckles when Abigail sends him a wide eyed look of horror.

“Ok, old man. It’s time to get educated.” She teases, leaning forward she punches Will in the shoulder, “God you’re ancient. I can’t believe you’ve neer seen this movie before.”

“I’m not that old.”

“And how old is that?”

Will stays quiet and Abigail snickers. They turn quiet as the movie starts and Will relaxes for the rest of the evening.

“You haven’t been looking at our father killer in a while. What changed?” Hannibal takes a seat next to Will where he is looking through photos of the Ripper’s old crime scene, along with Gideon’s.

“It’s been a week and we haven’t gotten a new kill from here. Meanwhile, Gideon is singing like a songbird in a cage saying he’s the Ripper. I’m just preparing for when the real Ripper

drops a new body." Will sighs, looking up when he smells hot coffee being place before him. "Thank you."

"You still do not believe Gideon is the Ripper?"

"Jack does, the rest of the team does. I know he's not. And after the lovely article Lounds wrote I'm sure there's going to be shit show." Will scribbles on a notepad by his side, jotting down the differences he finds looking through the autopsies and photos. "It'll be like a territorial dispute."

"Will Gideon make a worthy enemy in this fight?"

Snorting, Will looks up at the good doctor, "Are you kidding me? The Ripper and Abel Gideon? That is like putting a house dog gone rabid in a cage with a feral tiger, one of them is going to get eaten and it's definitely not going to be the tiger."

The older man smirks, fixing one of the papers on the desk, "A tiger is a worthy creature to be compared to."

"Only the worthiest of creatures can compare to a monster like the Ripper." Will fixes his glasses, hoping to keep them low on his face to avoid eye contact. Sometimes the older man looked at him with such a strong fixture it made Will shiver to the bone.

Hannibal is quick to change course, "How is your unexpected guest doing?"

"She's fine. Just going through…relationship problems, and I'm the only one she can talk to about it." Will answers easily.

"Her parents are not here?"

"No, she hasn't come out to her mother yet and her father left when she was young."

“Then would that make you her father figure?”

“In a way, yes. She doesn’t really have anyone else to turn to with these problems. And she already knows we both lean towards the same sex when it comes to relationships.”

“It is always hard for children to realize they are homosexual in today’s world, even harder coming out to their parents. They will either face shame or be kicked out of the house. Cruel to think a parent would be so quick to hate their child over something like that.”

“Unimaginable. The worst kind of pain a child could suffer through is for their own parents to hate them.”

“She’s in good hands then, if she turns to you for comfort.” Will has to hold back the snort rising in him. The way he can play this little game with the doctor is more entertainment he gets out of a week. “Does she know of your sentence?”

“Course she does. Who doesn’t.” Will lets slip out her name before he can stop himself, “Abigail doesn’t care though, she has know me for a while to know I’m not the killer type.”

Their conversation comes to an end with the echoing sound of heels clicking against the tile floor as Dr. Bloom, followed by Jack, enter the room Will has come to call his office.

“Will.” She startles at the sight of Hannibal being there with him. “And Hannibal, surprise to see you down here. Or here at all.”

“I like to accompany Will when he is shuffling through cases down here. It’s a quiet little hide away for us to work.” The man explains, still seeming to be out of place in the little basement room than a tiger would be out in a shopping market.

“We have a medium where we can speak to the Chesapeake Ripper. Is there a way to push him?” Jack interrupts, catching the room's attention.

Will raises an eyebrow, “Push him toward what?”

“We might be able to influence him to blow up and become visible.” Alana explains.

Jack turns to Will, “Could we enrage him?”

“To what purpose, Jack? I’m not sure what you’re asking for.”

“Advice. That’s what I’m asking for. Could we enrage the Chesapeake Ripper and focus his attention?”

“He’s already focused on Gideon as his adversary. Don’t fool around.”

“Gideon’s just a tabloid rumor. We need to make him the truth.”

Will leans back in his seat, thoughtful as he crosses his arms, “You might push the Ripper to kill again just to prove he isn’t in a hospital for the criminally insane.”

“I *have* to push, Will.”

His eyebrows scrunch together when he realizes how Jacknis going to go about this, it’s on the top of his tongue to ask the man to not do it but Jack doesn’t look like he’s really listening for an arguements.

“Are you thinking of playing ball with Freddie Lounds?”

“You know yourself it’s the best way to bait the real Chesapeake Ripper.”

Taking his glasses off, Will rubs at his face with a low sigh, “She’s already here, isn’t she.”

“Upstairs. We were just waiting for you to join us.”

Glancing over at Hannibal as the man had been quiet the whole conversation, the man turned to answer his glance. A playful little smirk on his lip as he is about to witness Will trying to play nice with Freddie Lounds.

“Dr. Lecter is welcome to join us. It would be good to get another minds opinion.”

The older man stands with ease, “It would be my pleasure.”

Shoulders tightening, Will stands as well and follows behind like a lurking shadow that won’t seem to go away. He watches the way Hannibal seems to take up as much space as he can with simply his presence, its in the way Alana and Jack make enough room between them for Hannibal it could be mistaken for another hallway. A wolf in the presence of sheep that have yet to realize what is hiding under that false skin. When they make it to the office where Freddie is sitting. Jack enters with a welcoming facade on his face, one that everyone else easily catches onto and mirrors. Will is the only one outside of this circle, seething under the skin at the sight of the red head.

“Good morning, Agent Crawford. Thank you for inviting me.” Freddie holds her hand out with a smile which Jack takes gratefully.

“This is Dr. Bloom, one of our psychiatric consultants, along with Dr. Lecter. And I believe you know Will Graham.” Jack introduces the trio, everyone shaking hands.

“Dr. Bloom.Dr. Lecter. Hello, Mr. Graham. So good to see you.”

Will simply stares, inscrutable. Vexed at being in the room with this woman.

Jack addresses Freddie, “You got all the qualities of a good reporter, Ms. Lounds. Intelligence, guts, and the good eye. How did you end up where you ended up?”

Freddie’s attention is on the agent then, “Where I ended up being in criminal justice journalism?”

Will sniffs, holding back a scoff or a snarl, neither of which are close to what he truly wants to do, “Criminal justice journalism being a euphemism for tabloid reporting?”

“You ran an unconfirmed story on the Chesapeake Ripper. What I want is for you to confirm it.” Jack leans forward on his elbows, creating a friendly invitation for conversations.

“An exclusive story would be a coup.” She tilts her head like a curious cat, Will wishes he were a rabid dog. Just so he could bite her head off and shake her dead body around before leaving it for the scavengers.

Hannibal shifts next to him, fixing his suit and Will can almost feel the man’s amusement. A glance tells Will that Hannibal had been watching him as he thought about how cruelly he’d rip apart Freddie with his hands. Good, Will thinks, maybe he’ll share in the fun.

Jack plays with Freddie’s narcissistic side, “You would have the satisfaction of seeing Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, the sanctified Washington Post and the holy New York Times run copyrighted material under your byline with a picture credit.”

“What’s against you and by association us is that your brand of journalism is obnoxious, and therefore disliked.” Will speaks up, avoiding looking at anyone while staring at a wall in the background.

“Yes, that is an obstacle.” She turns that fox's smile towards Jack, “I tried to get an interview with Dr. Gideon. I was denied. Evidently some trouble with my euphemism.”

“I’m friendly with the new Chief of Staff. I can get you an interview.” Alana throws in which makes Freddie straighten up with interest.

Freddie eyes the room like she’s looking for a way to slip in through the cracks to grab her newest story, of course Jack is the easiest to get through, “Not to snap bubblegum and crack wise, but what’s my angle? Is he the Chesapeake Ripper or you just want me to tell everybody he is.”

“He could be. Certain personalities are attracted to certain professions.”

“Do you know which professions psychopaths disproportionately gravitate to?” Crawford questions.

The red head raises an eyebrow, “CEOs, lawyers. The clergy.”

“Number five on the list is surgeons.”

“I know the list.” She smirks.

“Then you know what number six is.”

Again, all eyes are on Will for his rash comments, “Journalists. Know what number seven is, Mr. Graham?”

Clenching his teeth and twisting his head to crack his neck, Will sighs and tries not to growl as he says, “Law enforcement.”

“Isn’t it funny, what a little bit of research will help you come across these days? People put about just anything on the internet, and for a good amount of cash they’ll even sell things out. Do you know what I found out about your past, Mr. Graham?”

Now the irritation begins to bleed out, “Let me guess,” He wets his lips, “you found out I used to be an officer?”

“And look where that ended? Five years of prison, must do a lot to a man like you. Your old colleges used to say you had some kind of magic to you when it came to solving crimes, voodoo or whatever else they liked to say. Called you a boogeyman for criminals with the kind of jumps you would make.”

Will bares his teeth, “Anyone with a computer can find that kind of stuff about me, Lounds. It’s really not that hard to find.”

“I just find it a little odd the FBI would be asking for help from a man convicted of murder.”

“I was acquitted.”

“For what? Insanity plea? Surprised they didn’t just send you down the street to the Baltimore State Hospital for Criminally Insane, then it would have been you I would be interviewing and not Dr. Gideon.”

“I believe Will’s past is his own to know, Miss Lounds. We’re not here to talk about Will, we’re here to catch a killer.” Hannibal intervenes like an Angel with a blazing trumpet the way his voice grabs the rooms attention.

Freddie is quick to settle back in her place like a cat realizing it’s in the presence of a lion, it makes Will bite the inside of his cheek. Hating the way she seems to try and challenge him at every vantage but with Hannibal she is docile and hides away.

“Of course, doctor. How forgetful of me.”

Freddie Lounds stalks and corners Will at his car when he leaves the building for the day. The sky was like the color of spilled fish guts in a bright kitchen, taking off his glasses Will cleans the lens before making his way to his car. She was waiting for him outside of the building, watching as everyone left to make sure she didn't miss her big opportunity.

Feeling eyes upon him as he walks, Will straightens his back and turns to glare at the woman.

"Mr. Graham, I apologize for my behavior in there, it was sloppy and misguided. I never did get to formally introduce myself to you." She holds her hand out to him and once more Will stares at with disdain. She pulls her hand back.

"Are you trying to salvage this joke of yours from the mouth of madness?" He has to grit his teeth a little to at least sound less like he's dying from this simple conversation.

"I only came to apologize, and of course ask you a few questions."

"You wrote a paper about me, two actually, and the main two things you talked about was how I was a rabid animal the FBI was using to help solve cases. The only problem with trying to keep a wild animal in a house is that you can't tame it no matter how hard you try, and it'll eventually turn on you." His upper lip curls.

"I can undo what I wrote, Mr. Graham."

"And what's the price? And interview? Rights to my story? No thanks. I don't care to defend my life from your viewers, Mrs Lounds, I do hope you get a little pocket money from your next article." He unlocks his car then and ignores Freddie as she watches his every move.

Waking up to a knife at his throat makes Will wonder if during their growth all daughters make a choice whether to love their father or to have the urge to kill. Abigail didn't get that choice while growing up. She could love her father just the same as a lamb loves a farmer up until they are slaughtered in the spring. There must be a time in a daughter's life when she must make the decision on whether or not she will love her father or hate him for the rest of her life. Have the bloodlust filled the urge to kill the man that raised her. Abigail must have already known the moment they created this lackluster, misshapen looking beast of a relationship. She's going to kill him, the balde licking at his throat tells him this and that is fact. But the ghost look of a daughter's love on the young woman's face tells him that this is not fact. This is a possibility.

Another road for Abigail to decide where she wants to go. Hate her new father or love him. Kill, consume, honor.

"Promise you'll make it painless." Will croaks out. Throat dry and scratchy from drinking last night and sitting half asleep out in the cold. Now his brain was like wading through muddy water just trying to find his lost boat with no luck.

The blade *shudders*, a sign of weakness. In that moment Will could throw her off, break her wrist and grab the knife before finishing was Garrett Jacob Hobbs couldn't and kill the missing spring lamb. He's stronger than Abigail, could overpower the young girl easily if he wanted to. And he's learned how to master his strength and craft in prison. But Will doesn't do any of this, he lies there belly up like a dog waiting to be put down. He thinks that if Abigail was the one who put an end to him he would accept it as his happy ending, wading back into his quiet stream where he can be at peace until the darkness has come to consume him.

She pulls the knife away and sits down on the edge of the bed, "I *can't*."

Her shoulder's tremble as she starts to cry and Will is quick to sit up and wraps his arms around her shoulders.

“It’s ok.” He soothes, runs his hand through Abigail’s hair as she turns her head to his throat and shakes like a leaf.

“I can’t do it. I can’t-”

“No one is going to force you to do what you don’t, Abigail. Much less me.”

He lets her cry her heart out until all the fire in her body has gone out, after that she calms down and Will pulls away.

“What made you decide to come all the way here in the middle of the night and try to kill me?” Will is only half serious, he knows already but thinks maybe if Abigail talks it out a little it will make her feel better.

“I haven’t thought about my dad in a while, but I got drunk last night and I just- everything all came flooding out at once. I hate him for taking everything away from me.”

“Do you hate me as well?”

“You haven’t ruined me yet, nor do you plan on killing me.”

“You’re right, I don’t. And I don’t want you to die either way.” He speaks more honestly to her than he does to anyone else. “You’re tired?”

Abigail nods her head.

“Do you want to sleep here? I can go and sleep downstairs on the couch.” Will sits up, ready to leave.

“Can you- can you stay here, I just want company.”

Nodding his head, Will shifts over to give her all the space in the bed, pushing himself to the other side of the bed until it was like he wasn’t there. Abigail lies down with her back turned to him, a child curled up against their parent’s bed after a nightmare. She looks so fragile like a hurt puppy but Will knows how sharp puppy teeth can be. They don’t talk and Will is quick to fall asleep again, this time without the worry of his impeding death.

He’s the first to wake up and so he gets out of bed and starts breakfast. In the middle of cooking the eggs Will’s phone goes off, it’s Jack. Ignoring the call so he can finish cooking, Will smiles when he sees Abigail come walking down the stairs, she apparently had a shower before joining him. Wearing one of the sweatpants she left at his house and his old sweaters, its odd how easily she looks like she could have been his daughter. The pale skin, dark hair and blue eyes, and that look on her face like a tentative wolf hiding in deer skin just waiting to see who’s going to notice. But they’ve perfected the art so well that no one can see the masks they’re wearing anymore. Maybe when they were younger it was easier to see the cracks in their face, the wolf under the mask was harder to control at a younger age but now it’s been tamed and waiting for them to tell it to kill.

“Morning.” Will sets a plate out for her to eat and she gives him a soft smile.

“Sorry for throwing my shit all over you last night.” She aplogizes but Will shakes hs head.

“S’alright. I told you I’m here for you whenever you need me. I just want you to be safe.”

“And not kill again?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“But it’s what you want.”

His phone goes off again and Will winces. Fuck. Persistent was that Agent Crawford, but it’s what made him a good agent. Never one to give up the bone until he’s caught the next killer.

“You should probably answer that.” Abigail cuts her eggs before taking a bite.

“Yeah.” Will sets his phone to the side. “But he can wait a little longer.”

They eat in comfortable silence, Will stares out the window while Winston noses at Abigail’s ankles begging for leftovers. They chuckle over his plaintive whines and Will tosses him a piece of sausage out of pity. Another call, this time its Alana.

Sighing, Will answers the phone, “Dr. Bloom.”

“Is there a reason you’re ignoring Jack’s call? He’s already blown up my phone up with fifteen messages, and I started to worry a little.” She answers, the shiver of worry in her voice has Will sighing again.

“Had a rough night, headache, didn’t wake up until a few minutes ago. What does Jack need me for now?”

Alana is quiet, “We were right about pushing the Ripper, he made a kill last night.”

Shit. “Shit.” He rubs at his face and glances over at Abigail, “Who’s on their way?”

“Hannibal.”

Of course.

“Does he often volunteer to carpool or am I just special?”

That pulls a short laugh from Alana, “Well, I-” She stutters a little, “I’m not sure how to answer that, but I will say that I’ve never seen him infatuated with someone before.”

Interesting. “You think he’s infatuated with me? It almost makes it feel like we’re talking about a school crush.” Another laugh from Alana, “I’ll talk to you later, bye.”

“Who’s that?”

“My court order psychologist.”

“Oh.” Abigail raises her eyebrows, “And this Hannibal guy? Who’s he?”

Will thinks on it for a moment, “He’s something, but I’m not sure yet. I need to change, stay here as long as you need. Just make sure to feed Winston before you leave.”

“Sure thing, dad.” She’s only joking but they both pause and glance at the other person. Abigail quickly turns to look back at her food and finish it up. Giving another glance to Abigail, Will leaves to get a shower before changing into a flannel and jeans.

He pulls on his overcoat once Hannibal has pulled up and yells a goodbye to Abigail.

“Is this a finer morning for you than it is for me?” Will asks once he settles into the car.

Hannibal gives him a curious look, “How so?”

“I didn’t expect the Ripper to strike within two days after the article was posted. Seems out of character even for the Ripper to act like a child having a tantrum when Mommy and Daddy aren’t giving them too much attention.”

Something like a flash of anger crosses over Hannibal's face and Will has to hold himself back from smirking at the man. The drive to the crime scene is left silent after the first exchange of words, classical music sings between the two of them.

Will glances over Hannibal every once in a while out of curiosity but the man keeps up a blank facade. Closing his eyes, Will lets his mind drift like a ship at sea.

Later, Will finds himself in an empty field facing a dead body that he knows is a gift just for him. Does he say this out loud? No. Will keeps that knowledge hidden deep within in chest, door shut and locked because if he were to tell the others about this secret all Hell would be loose. The dead man before him is the perfect profile on what they have for the Ripper; middle aged white man, surgeon, knows his way around the human body, upper class, and isolated from his peers. The man is lying naked present on a bed of red chrysanthemums, in his hands was the man's own heart which the killer had cut out of the man's chest and leaving it open. His guts had been removed completely so that it was an empty cavern, a small candle sat inside the empty man's chest cavity. The man's top skull had been sawed open and the brain removed instead replaced with sweet williams.

"Someone must have just visited the florist." Zellar cracks, earning a snort from Price who finished up brushing over the body for prints.

"The killer hasn't made as much as a noise for the past two years, and finally he's making a very loud statement." Jack stares at the scene like it had taken the form of the killer itself, hands on his hips while he jaw was tight. "But now he's making as much noise as it takes to grab our attention. Is this a message for Gideon?"

Will snorts, "No. In fact, I don't think the Ripper even cares about Gideon at all. He's brushing him off, this is his statement and he's saying he doesn't care about Gideon because his attention is elsewhere."

"Where is his attention at then?"

"Red chrysanthemums represent deep passion and love, often given in secret to a lover. And he's offering his heart up to the person he is infatuated with, no guts and the candle- he's got nothing to hide. He's showing his love and hoping it's returned in the same way." Will rubs at

his jaw, glancing over at Hannibal who studies the scene before him with no expression. It was like staring at a clean slate when it came to the man's expression.

"And the flowers in his head?"

"Sweet Williams can often be a symbol for gallantry and masculinity. Passion and love. The Ripper is in love and makes it very obvious with this tableau." Will steps closer to the body, staring at the beauty standing before him.

He can feel the killers infatuation for the him, it was like feeling the heat from the son on a hot day. Skin sweating and glowing from the rays of the sun, it made his muscle go lax and a wave of sleepiness wash over him. Like a cat getting ready to take a nap.

Closing his eyes, Will lets himself step into the Ripper's shoes. Like taking off a jacket and putting on a new one, except this one is easy to settle in.

I know this man but he does not know me, I've been stalking him for weeks and he is the perfect candidate to take my place in this kill. He fits the profile which is why I choose him but he is also a pig. I want to elevate him to a higher art form than he ever could be but I am also making this a love letter.

I kill him in his own home, he lives alone and is not friendly with the neighbors which makes this easier for me, they won't worry to check up on him if he's gone for a few days. I choke him to death, I have been waiting for him in the dark and he doesn't suspect a thing because he is blond to the darkness. Once he's finished with his last breath I take him to a secondary location, my kill room if you will, because what I am about to do will be bloody. The first thing I remove is the brain; I cut through the skull with a bone saw and am quick to remove the brain for later use and then rub curing salt on the inside of the skull. Leaving it to dry I cut open the chest and take hours to remove every organ inside of the man and rub curing salt on the inside as well. Fresh dirt is shooveled from a garden and then put into the dried skull where I plant the sweet Williams.

The heart is a sacred part for this gift and will be placed last because it needs to be perfect. Once the body is finished I take it to the empty field to finish the git. The candle is set into the empty chest as I am baring myself to the man. Red chrysanthemums are settled under the

body like the man was sleeping in them, before placing the heart in the man's hands like I was holding it out to you.

This is a bloody valentine.

This is my design.

Shaking off the Ripper's hold on him, Will feels his hands shake a little as he looks up and his eyes stare directly towards Hannibal.

Oh

Oh

I see you now, Dr. Lecter. Will feels a curl of a dark smirk cross over his face when Hannibal mirrors his own expression. It looks like he'll be having dinner with the doctor later today after all.

Hannibal answers the door as he always does; with the grace of the Grim Reaper opening his wings to allow you the embrace of sweet death. This was the only time Hannibal allowed a person the boon of a painless death and it was only for this cut in the fabric of time that Will allowed himself to enter deaths domain.

No words are exchanged as Hannibal takes Will's coat from him to hang it up, and Will raises his arm that has cradled between his elbow and chest a brown parcel of wrapping paper.

“I decided that tonight I would produce the meat for tonights dinner. Caught it just the other day.” He holds the parchment out.

Taking it, Hannibal leads Will to the kitchen where he places the parchment on the counter and opens it up to investigate the procured flesh. The glint in the man’s eyes as he sees the thick slab of reddish pink meat, still bleeding a little onto the brown paper.

“Not fish?”

“Haven’t been out to the stream yet. No, this was a healthy cow I collected from a butcher who lets his cattle roam freely..”

“An expensive choice, yet they are one of the tastier choices besides the meat they supposably sell at stores nowadays.” Hannibal gives him the mirror of a smile, “Do you have any objects to a traditional Japanese hot pot, Will?”

Will points at himself, “Five years of eating prison food, I don’t have objects to anything you’ll put on my plate.”

“Excellent. I have a bottle of Mori Izo, a shōchū made from sweet potato. A mellow taste without any bitterness to it that I think will go well with our dinner.” Hannibal leaves the meat alone at the counter to go to his pantry where he has a stick of spices, cheese, greenery and wine stocked up in there.

Will glances down at his own clothes to make sure there isn’t any left over dog hair on his black dress pants. He had chosen a red blushing pink shirt for the night, thinking of the fish in name. They turn this color when mating season comes around. The implication is not lost on Will, after all it’s why he picked the shirt in the first place. He only wonders if Hannibal knows of this implication as well or does it go beyond the man’s knowledge.ledge. When Hannibal enters the kitchen it’s with a bottle of shōchu and two crystal wine glasses.

“May I watch you cook?” Will asks while Hannibal pours their drink.

“Of course. I always enjoy your company, Will, and nothing would fill me with more joy then having you in the place I consider the heart of my home.” Hannibal puts charmingly.

Hannibal sets the meat to the side and takes off his suit jacket as well as his vest, and goes to grab the white apron he has hanging on one of the back walls of the kitchen. He wraps it around his waist and before Hannibal can start to tie the strings on the apron, Will steps in and takes over for him. There’s only a few inches between him and the older man, and Will watches with captive silence as Hannibal momentarily straightens his already perfect posture and his muscles tighten. The man was ready to defend himself, jumping out of the way like Will was about to pull a weapon on him. Instead, Wil finished tying the apron around Hannibal’s back and gave it a soft tug to make sure it was secure, stepping back Will sauntered back to his glass of shochu.

The older man gave him a slow cat like blink before continuing forward, he began pulling out a huge pot and other ingredients; tofu, negi, chinese cabbage, shungiku, shiitake and enokitake mushrooms, and lastly glass noodles.

“The dish I am preparing is called, Sukiyaki, it is generally a popular dish for both celebratory and communal meals shared with friends and family. Sukiyaki became a part of Japanese cuisine towards the end of the Edo period in the 1860s and popularized during the subsequent Meiji period. There are various stories regarding the history of sukiyaki. The name “sukiyaki” comes from “suki” meaning spade, or even “sukimi” meaning thinly sliced meat, and “yaki” meaning grilled.” Hannibal begins to explain as he works around the kitchen, “Edo farmers would cook their fish and tofu with their spades, known as suki. During this Edo period in Japan, beef was banned because of Buddhism beliefs and because cattle, which were brought in from Korea and China, were highly regarded for their cultivation of the rice paddies. There were only 2 exceptions to eating beef during the Edo period. When you were sick, such as the ailing soldiers. And for special events, like the year-end parties, which explains why sukiyaki is a popular meal at the end of the year.”

“Is this a celebration dinner then, Hannibal? I only ask because you seem to be in a good mood.”

“Dinner with a friend can always be likened to a celebration if you enjoy their presence.”

Tilting his head, Will finds a slow smirk curling at the corner of his lip, “Careful, Dr. Lecter, I’m beginning to think you might be flirting with me.”

The man stops, “Shall I stop?”

“I didn’t say you should.” Will sets his glass down and rolls up his sleeves, “I’m not the greatest cook, but is there anyway I can help?”

“In the pantry I have a small portable stove you may take to the table and set up, as we will be cooking and dining in there. One of the specialties about this dish is that you eat it as you cook.” Hannibal begins to was the vegetables, “I will have to prepare the vegetables, cut the beef and then make the warishita before I take everything to the table.”

Doing as he’s told, Will goes to the pantry and is quick to find the portable stove, it looks almost tacky compared to the other cooking devices Hannibal has in his kitchen. Not saying anything about the stove, Will sets it in the middle of the table making sure it has everything to it needs to start before turning to leave. A garish display of flowers has Will stopping misstep, on the fireplace mantle Will takes note of the flower arrangement: red chrysanthemum and sweet william’s, in the bouquet there are the tiny skulls of ravens and shedded deer antlers. The man was being very courageous this afternoon, it made Will’s stomach begin to grow sickly warm.

Stepping back into the kitchen, he asks, “Shall I cut the meat?”

Hannibal looks up from where he’s cutting the vegetables into easy to eat pieces, “It needs to be thinly cut.”

“Show me.” Will moves the meat into a cutting board and pulls a knife out of the block Hannibal has on the counter.

Wiping his hands, Hannibal comes over to Will’s side of the island. He doesn’t take the knife from Will’s hand, no instead Hannibal reverses their positions from before as his chest presses against Will’s back. Hannibal moves his arms so they are on top of Will’s, covering his hands with his own and leading Will’s knife hand like a puppet master would. The heat of their bodies pressed against one another is not lost on Will as he is more so distracted by their hands touching than the heat. It lays between them so warm and comfortable, unlike the cold beast hidden under the mask Hannibal wears.

The older man’s hands were so warm and smooth, only his fingers wore the age of labor on them and it made Will’s groin heat up. Hannibal helps Will cut three pieces off the meat before he steps back, his fingers sliding over Will’s skin before departing along with their heat.

“That slice should suffice for dinner.” Hannibal tells him before moving back to his side.

Clearing his throat, Will says, “I can do that.”

They work in silence together, the sound of their work and their breathing are loud in the quiet kitchen. Taking breaks to sip his wine and watch as Hannibal mixes up the warishita, he then places the vegetables in to a bowl so he can bring the items into the kitchen. Once Will finishes cutting the meat he brings that in as well as their drinks. Hannibal sets the pot over the stove and pours in the warishita. They sit across from one another at the table and Will fills up their glasses with more of the shōchū.

“To begin, we will let the warishita boil and then will place the vegetables and meat in there to cook. When it's done we will serve the food to our plates before cooking more.” Hannibal holds up the silver chopsticks and begins showing Will the proper way to hold them before placing the vegetables into the pot.

“You’re being very upfront tonight.” Will tells the older man, watching the meat cook in the pot. “The flowers are the biggest dead giveaway.”

Those eyes that look up at him are those of a predator, the man’s face shifts with the shadows switching from smug knowledge to this look like he’s ready to reach across the table and stab Will through the throat. God it was exciting.

“The flowers are a little too much.” Will grins, sipping his wine. “It’s funny. I thought you would have been something boring, and yet you just so happen to be one of the rarest of your kind.”

“My kind?”

“Our kind. Killers.”

“I thought I was of no interest to you. What changed?”

“You’re the one leaving me courting gifts, shall I ignore it and leave you with a broken heart?”

“Did you have any expectations when you came to my home tonight?” Hannibal easily changes the subject.

“Expectations often lead to disappointment.”

“How do you usually treat disappointment, Will?”

Taking a bite of the cooking beef, Will savory's the mixture of spices and flavor in his mouth before answering, “Before prison, I would medicate it with a bottle of Jack. In prison, I usually let myself float away into the shadows.” He takes another bite, “Or I’d let Matthew fuck me.”

The man was good at keeping his expressions to a minimum, however Will can’t help but take note of the smallest eye twitch the man has in his left eye.

“Matthew?”

“Friend of mine, although I guess it’s hard to still call him a friend since we really only interacted in prison. He was my cell mate, and I guess my friend, mostly a fuck budy.” Will sips at his shōchū, “He was a murderer though, so I guess you can’t really say we had a friendship. Pity, he was pretty decent to talk to.”

“What was his charges?”

“First degree manslaughter. Killed one of his coworkers from what he told me. He had him tied him to a pole and slit his wrist so he could bleed out, all the while the man was balancing on a bucket. So it was either death by being hanged or death by bleeding out.”

“Almost as if he were trying to recreate the killing of Jesus.”

“Almost,” Will chews thoughtfully, “Just without all the love.”

“Do you think the Ripper killed with love? Or is he just like this Matthew and killed just because he could.”

Will almost wants to sigh and roll his eyes at the man, though he does neither knowing they would both be rude. Instead he pops another piece of vegetables into the pot and waits for it to cook.

“I think the Ripper doesn’t kill out of love or with the intention of love, he kills because he wants to exterminate the ride from this world. Elevate them into something he deems beautiful. He sees art in everyday life and potential in what he deems is his next pig for the slaughter house.” Will brings his eyes up from the pot so he can stare at Hannibal, “However, this time the Ripper killed because he’s smitten over a man who doesn’t realize that he’s just invited a monster to his bed.”

“How do you think the Ripper’s supposed partner will react when they find out his dark secret?”

“Depends on who the Ripper thinks is worthy to share his life with. Either they’ll accept what the Ripper does but does not join, or they will join in the slaughter and we’ll have even more bodies on our hands. Let’s just hope whatever path the person chooses is the path filled with fewer bodies.”

They smile at each other with their fangs as they finish the rest of dinner.

Hannibal puts the dishes away when they finish dinner and Will helps put the stove back in its place. Walking back to the front door, Hannibal helps Will put back on his coat and then the two stare at one another.

“Thank you for dinner, Hannibal.” Will’s voice cuts through the silence as the two look each other up and down like predators guessing the amount of power the other has.

The older man gives him the barest hint of a smile, “Thank you for providing the meat.”

Bringing his hand up, Will cups one side of Hannibal’s face so he can press a kiss to the man’s lips. Hannibal’s body leans into his as their lips press together with just the barest hint of teeth, pulling himself away from any further temptation Will grins.

“I enjoyed our date, Dr. Lecter. Until the next one.”

Chapter End Notes

Kind of leaving this off like this, I had a lot of ideas for this fic but can't figure out a good enough ending nor can I figure out how I want to continue this fic. So instead of leaving it unfinished I'm just going to leave it with an open ending LMAO Sorry!! If I get the inspiration to add more I absolutely will.

End Notes

If you can't tell I really love Will being creepy but also Abigail's weird step dad. Anyways, hopefully I get the next chapter out in a week or two because I'm slow and have a lovely 7-5 job. Comments and kudos are well loved!! Tell me what you think so far or what you think might happen next!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!